SERMONS
AND
DISCOURSES
ON SEVERAL
SUBJECTS
AND
OCCASIONS.

BY

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THE CONTENTS OF THE Fourth VOLUME.

SERMON I.

On the Martyrdom of King *Charles* I.

LUKE xxiii. 28.

Daughters of Jerusalem, *weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your Children.* 3

A Day of Trouble, Rebuke, and Blasphemy, that derived Infamy, Misery, and Guilt upon this Nation. *pag.* 3, 4

The Text taken from one of the Lessons, which, according to the Course of the Liturgy, was read to the King just before his Martyrdom, and is now appointed to be read on the Day of its Commemoration. *p.* 4

The laſt Moments of his Life, in Imitation of our Bleſſed Saviour's, were employed in awakening a drowſy Nation to a Senſe of its Guilt, and a Dread of its impending Puniſhment. 6

I. The Doctrine this Day ſuggeſts to us, are, That we miſplace our Grief, if we employ it in bewailing and lamenting our martyr'd Sovereign. 7,8

The Day on which the ancient Martyrs were *crowned*, ſolemnized with Joy like their Birth-days. 8

In like manner we ought to magnify the Grace of God, which inſpired our Sovereign with ſuch Virtues, as made him ſhine with greater Luſtre in the Depth of his Sufferings, than he did in his moſt flouriſhing Circumſtances. 9, 10

And raiſed him in his loweſt State as far above the moſt proſperous Princes, as they themſelves ſeem raiſed above the reſt of Mankind. 10—13

By which he has given an Inſtance to profane Men, of the Power of thoſe religious Principles, which could ſupport him under all the Indig-

Indignities that befel him. 14
And reflects an Honour on that Church, at whose Breast he sucked those Principles. 14, 15
Every Consideration that heightens his Virtue, enhances the Guilt of the Instruments of his Ruin, 15, 16
II. Nations, as Nations, are liable to Guilt, and consequently to Punishment. 16
The Reason why this appears clearer from the Old Testament than the New. 17, 18
How this Nation is concerned in the Guilt of the Martyrdom. 18, 19
The inflaming Circumstances of its Guilt. 20, 21
Which was punished, in some Measure, by its own necessary Consequences. 22—26
These not put to an end at the Restoration 27
Nor ever can be, while the Doctrines that paved the Way to this Wickedness are embraced and cherished. 30—34
A Deprecation of God's Judgments. 34, 35

SERMON II.

The wicked Lives of *Christians* no Argument against the Truth of *Christianity*.

1 TIM. vi. 1.

That the Name of God and his Doctrine be not blasphemed. 39

Tho' the Purity of the Christian Morality is a Proof of its divine Original, yet the wicked Lives of *Christians* are urged as an Objection against it. 39—41

I. An Enquiry into the Grounds of this Objection: Where it may be observed,

That as bad Men are under the Christian Dispensation, they would have been worse without it. 42

The Vices we observe among *Christians* strike the Imagination more strongly, by reason of their Nearness. 43

And because they are attended with a deeper Guilt. 44

The

The Virtues of a good *Christian* less known, because practised with a View only to another World. 44
The Author of *The Whole Duty of Man* a remarkable Instance of this. 45
II. Allowing the Complaint to be just, there would be no Reason to urge it to the Disadvantage of Christianity itself. 46
1. The holiest and purest Doctrine is but Doctrine still, and can only instruct and admonish, not compel. 47
It is no more an Argument against Revealed than against Natural Religion. 48, 49
2. Christianity in its Infancy had all the Influence upon the Lives of its Professors that could be expected; and if it has not the same now, this must not be imputed to its Doctrine, but to other Reasons. 50, 51
As 1st Because it is not embraced so much upon Principle, as formerly. 52
2dly Because different Schemes of Religion have been invented, very different from the Purport of the Gospel. 53

3dly *Christians* that reject the Means of becoming good Men, must be *naturally* worse for them, as well as *judicially* so. 58

4thly It is hard to make Christianity answerable for the ill Lives of those, who do not in good earnest receive it; and harder still, that those very Men, whose Lives give Occasion for this Objection, should press it most eagerly. 59

III. The Inferences from this Discourse are,

1. The Degeneracy of *Christians* is no Argument against the Truth of Christianity, but rather a Confirmation of it, because such a Degeneracy was actually foretold by *Christ* and his Apostles. 60, 61

And because the Design of Christianity, which was to reform the World, being so remarkably defeated, it must have come to nought long ago, if it had not been from God. 62

2. From our present Degeneracy we may conclude we were once in a better State. 62, 63

3. We

3. We learn from hence not to measure Persons by Doctrines, or Doctrines by Persons. 64, 65
4. The best Way to remove this Scandal taken against Christianity, is to conform our Lives to the Doctrines of it. 65—67

SERMON III.

The Fear of God a Motive to Holiness.

PHIL. ii. 12.

Work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling. 71

The Author of our Nature has been pleased to address himself to our Passions, as well as our Reason. 71, 72
I. Some *general* Reflections that may serve to lessen the ill Opinion scrupulous Persons entertain of their Repentance, from its being founded upon a Principle of Fear. 73
1. The Gospel presses the Necessity of Repentence in general; but is silent as to the Motive from whence it must arise. 74

2. Those

2. Thoſe that think their Repentance ill grounded, becauſe it was owing to a Principle of Fear, might as well think their Scruples ill grounded, that are owing to the very ſame Principle. 75, 76

3. It is no ſlight Token of a Man's being really good, becauſe he ſuſpects himſelf not to be ſo. 76—78

II. The Fear of God's Wrath *particularly* proved to be a proper Motive to Obedience. 79

1. Becauſe Fear is a Paſſion implanted by God in our Nature, and it never anſwers its End ſo well, as when it has this Effect upon us. 79—81

2. Becauſe God cannot be conſidered as a Law-giver, without enforcing his Laws by a Sanction. 81, 82

The Hope of a Reward as much a *ſelfiſh* Principle, as the *Fear* of loſing one. 82, 83

3. The State of a profligate Sinner is ſuch, that nothing but Terror can lay hold of him. 83—85

If this Principle has done the Work of a better, it has had its proper Effect. 88—90

Melan-

Melancholy Persons persuade themselves into an Opinion that they *love* God less, and *dread* him more than they really do 90, 91
The right Use of these Apprehensions is to take Occasion from them to advance faster in the Ways of Religion. 91, 92

SERMON IV.

The Terrors of Conscience.

MATT. xiv. 1, 2, 3.

At that Time Herod *the Tetrarch heard of the Fame of* Jesus, *and said unto his Servants, This is* John *the Baptist, he is risen from the Dead, and therefore mighty Works do shew forth themselves in him. For* Herod *had laid hold on* John, *and bound him, and put him in Prison for* Herodias *sake, his Brother* Philip's *Wife.* 95

The State of the Wicked a very restless one. 95, 96
The Wildness and Inconsistency of *Herod*'s Imagination. 97, 98

I. The

I. The Reproaches of Conſcience unavoidable, proved from Scripture. 101
From Reaſon. 104
And Experience. 107
A late Writer who always dreaded being in the Dark, a remarkable Inſtance of this Truth. 112
Tiberius, another. 115
The Tales of Ghoſts and Spectres accounted for upon this Principle. 117
II. To account for the Difficulties that attend the Proof of this Propoſition, it is to be obſerved,
1. That our Judgments often miſlead us, when they are formed only upon the Outſide and Surface of Men's Actions. 120
2. That the Reprehenſions of Conſcience are not a continued, but intermitting Diſeaſe. 121
3. The few Inſtances of wicked Men that go out of the World without feeling the Stings of Conſcience, to be aſcribed either to ill Principles early and deeply imbibed, or to an Obſtinacy of Temper, or to a natural or acquired Stupidity. 124, 125

These

These only prove, that there are Monsters in the *moral*, as well as the *natural* World; but make nothing against the settled Laws of either. 125, 126

III. The Application of this Doctrine, That even for *Pleasure*'s Sake we ought to abstain from all criminal Pleasures. 127

As it is a good Rule for a happy Conduct of Life, to manage our *Domestick* Concerns right, that we may be easy under our own Roof; so it is the best Way to secure *Peace* to ourselves, by having it always in our Consciences. 129

Let those chiefly listen to this Reprover, who are otherwise set in a great measure above Reproof. 130

SER-

SERMON V.

St. *Paul*'s Defence before *Felix*.

ACTS xxiv. 25.

And as he reasoned of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come Felix *trembled.* 135

The astonishing Scene of St. *Paul*'s Preaching. *Ibid.*

I. The subject Matter of it remarkable for its Excellence and Importance. 137—140

And for its Fitness and Propriety with Regard to the Person, to whom it was addressed. 140, 141

The Dexterity and Address of the Apostle to be admired in the Conduct of it. 141, 142

His sincere and disinterested Spirit. 142, 143

And his undaunted and exemplary Courage. 142, 144

II. The Manner of St. *Paul*'s handling his Subject, *he reasoned.* 146

A wrong

A wrong Notion frequently entertained concerning edifying Discourses. 147, 148
III. The wonderful Effect of St. *Paul*'s Reasoning, *Felix trembled.* 149
The great Force and Efficacy of the Word of God when duly handled, shewn from this and other Instances in Scripture. 150—153
A Reproach to our Sluggishness and Insensibility. 153
Why St. *Paul*'s Preaching had not the same good Effect on *Drusilla*, the Partner with *Felix* in his Crimes. 153, 154
And why the good Effect on *Felix* was not more lasting. 155, 156
An Exhortation, that the Word of God may have a better Effect on us. 156—158

SER-

SERMON VI.

Of Glorying in the Croſs of CHRIST.

GAL. vi. 14.

But God forbid that I ſhould glory, ſave in the Croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, *whereby the World is crucified unto me, and I unto the World.* 167

The Occaſion of the Words of the Text opened. 162—167

I. Whatever Excellencies, outward Advantages, or Privileges it may be our Lot to enjoy, it miſbecomes us, as we are *Chriſtians*, to glory in them. 168

This urged from the Uncertainty of Their Continuance, or of Our continuing with them. 169

From the Tendency of the Doctrines of the Chriſtian Religion. 170

And from the Contemplation of *Chriſt*'s Triumph on the Croſs. 171—174

II. It

II. It highly becomes us to glory in the Croſs of *Chriſt*: 174

It is the Doctrine to which all the other Doctrines of the Goſpel refer, and from which they derive their Efficacy 175

The Propriety of the Church of *England*'s uſing the Sign of the Croſs in Baptiſm. 176, 177

III. The proper Methods of glorying in the Croſs of *Chriſt*; 177

1. By frequently meditating on his Sufferings: 178

2. By imitating thoſe meek Graces and Virtues that he diſplayed under them: 179

3. By celebrating the Memorial of his Death. 182—186

SERMON VI.

External Worſhip a fit and reaſonable Duty.

PSAL. xcv. 6.

O come let us worſhip, and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. 189

The Propriety of placing the Hymn, from whence the Text is taken, at the Entrance of our Morning Devotions. *Ibid.*

I. External Adoration ſhewn to be a reaſonable Duty, as it relates to *God*, and is Part of that *natural Homage*, which the *whole* Man, Soul and Body, owes to him, on Account of his Creation and Preſervation of us. 193

As we have no way of forming an Idea of God, but by conſidering the ſeveral limited Perfections, ſcattered among his Creatures; ſo we have no Way of applying to him as Dependents, but by conſidering thoſe Marks

Marks of Respect that are used among Men. 194, 195
External Worship mentioned as a natural Duty, in both Testaments. 197, 198
It is just we should glorify God in this Life with the Body as well as the Soul, if we expect he should glorify both in another. 199
If outward Worship is not due to God under the Gospel, the paying it to Idols cannot be highly culpable. 199, 200
II. External Worship a reasonable Duty, as it relates to *ourselves*, and is a Help towards promoting the spiritual Worship of our Souls. 200
The Emotions of the Soul are naturally communicated to the Body. 200, 201
The Body by its devout Gestures returns the Force the Soul lent it: 201—203
And by this Means makes amends, as it were for the Obstructions it gives in the Performance of many other Duties. 203, 204

III. External Adoration a reaſonable Duty, as it relates to our *Neighbour*, and is a Sign, by which we expreſs to others the religious Veneration that dwells in us. 204

The Advantages of publick Worſhip to excite the mutual Ardour of the Faithful, 204, 205

And to ſilence the Scoffs of the Unbeliever. 205, 206

An Exhortation to the Practice of this Duty, from the Inconvenience of the Neglect of it, 208

And the Example of the Primitive *Chriſtians*. 208, 209

SER-

SERMON VIII.

External Worſhip ſhewn to be of no Efficacy, unleſs accompanied with Internal Devotion: Together with the excellent Contrivance of the Church of *England* Service to promote the latter.

LAM. iii. 41.

Let us lift up our Hearts, with our Hands, unto God in the Heavens. 213

The Occaſion of the Text opened. 213, 214

The Folly of a mere external Worſhip without a ſuitable Affection of the Heart ſhewn from the Conſideration,

1. Of the Divine Nature: 216
2. Of our own: 218
3. Of the great End and Deſign of Prayer: 219

4 Of the Bleſſings, which, when duly performed, it is certainly attended with. 220

The great Advantages of the publick Offices of the Church of *England* to raiſe the Attention of all ſincere Worſhippers,

1. By their being drawn up in our Mother Tongue: 223
2. In their conſiſting of a premeditated Form of Words: 224
3. In their being divided into frequent Breaks and Pauſes: 227
4. In their Variety: 228
5. In the Solemnity of them, neither ſo plain as not to be able to rouſe, nor ſo gaudy as to diſtract the Mind. 229, *&c.*

SER-

SERMON IX.

The Usefulness of Church Musick; on Saint *Cecilia*'s Day, 1690.

PSAL. lvii. 7, 8.

My Heart is fixed, O God, my Heart is fixed; I will sing, and give Praise. Awake up, my Glory! Awake Psaltery and Harp! I myself will awake right early. 235

David a Man after God's Heart, by qualifying his own Heart for the Duties of the Sanctuary. 235, 236

The Purport of the Text. 236, 237

I. A lively Attention of Mind the great Recommendation of our publick Devotions to God. 239

The Difference between the *Jewish* Dispensation in this particular, and the *Christian*. 240, 241

II. All pious Helps to raise our Attention, proper to be used in our publick Worship. 243

Vocal and Inſtrumental Harmony uſeful to this purpoſe;

1. As it removes the ordinary Hindrances of our Devotion, *viz.*

The *Engagement* of Thought, which we often bring with us into Church, from what we laſt converſed with: 244

And thoſe accidental *Diſtractions* that happen to us during the Courſe of the Service: 245

And laſtly, that *Wearineſs* and Flatneſs of Mind, which ſome weak Tempers may labour under, by reaſon of the Length of it. 246

2. It not only removes Impediments to our Devotion, but ſupplies us with Advantages towards performing it;

By adding Solemnity to the publick Service; 247

And by raiſing in the Soul all the devout Paſſions, that of Love particularly, which wing it up to Heaven, and fit it for the Illapſes of the Holy Spirit, 249—253

St. *John*, in whoſe Breaſt divine Love ſeems to have abounded moſt, has ſpoken the moſt advantageouſly of Vocal and Inſtrumental Muſick. 251

Igna-

Ignatius inculcates the ſame Leſſon after him, who probably learnt it perſonally from him. 251, 252
It makes our Duty a Pleaſure, and enables us by that means to perform it with Vigour and Chearfulneſs. 253
This Effect remarkably viſible in *David*, 254
And ſeveral of the Chriſtian Fathers. 255
The Inconveniences that have ariſen from Church Muſick much overbalanced by the Advantages of it. 259
III. The Way of performing Divine Service in the *Church of England*, better fitted to raiſe our *Affections*, than any other Form of Devotion now practiſed in the Chriſtian World. 259, 260
IV. An Exhortation to make our Devotion exemplary in proportion to thoſe Advantages, which we above all others enjoy. 260—263

SER-

SERMON X.

Of Anxiety and Solicitude.

MATT. vi. 34.

Take no Thought for the Morrow. 267

The Precepts of our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount very different from the prevailing Opinions of the *Jews* at that Time. 267, 268

The Duty of the Text explained, with its proper Limitations. 269—273

I. The *Evil* of too great Anxiety ſhewn,

1. As it is oppoſite to ſeveral plain Precepts of Scripture; 274
2. As it is an Invaſion of the peculiar Province and Prerogative of God; 274, 275
3. As it is built always on a ſecret Diſtruſt of God's Goodneſs towards us, and perpetual Watchfulneſs over us: 276

Which yet very evidently appears to us from the Light of Nature; 277, 278

And from the Obſervation of his Providence over the ſeveral Ranks of lower and leſs noble Creatures. 278—280

II. The *Folly* of too great Anxiety.

1. It makes us feel Afflictions which will never overtake us, and multiplies thoſe which certainly will: 281—284
2. It takes away from us the Power either to *eſcape* or *bear* them. 285, 286
3. An anxious Concern for *Futurity* robs us of all the Eaſe and Advantages which might ariſe from a proper and diſcreet Uſe of the *preſent* Moment. 286
4. The *Preſence* of Evils often ſuggeſts better Expedients and wiſer Counſels, than all our Wiſdom and Foreſight can do. 287
5. By our tormenting Cares we forfeit our Intereſt in the divine Providence and Protection. 288, 289

An Exhortation to truſt in God. 290—293

SER-

SERMON XI.

The Wretchedness of living in a wavering State of Mind.

GEN. xlix. 4.

Unstable as Water, thou shalt not excel.

297

The Occasion of the Words. 297, 298

I. The ill Condition of that Man, who is distracted between two Courses of Life, a *good* and *bad* one. 299

1. He is in the meanest State of Mind, human Nature is capable of, inasmuch as he forfeits the Prerogative of his Understanding, which was designed for a Guide to him: 300

And disgraces the Image of God, whose glorious Attribute is *Immutability:* 301, 302

And lastly, makes himself lower than the Beasts, who act regularly under the Guidance of Instinct. 303

2. He is in a State of perpetual *Trouble* and *Disturbance* to himself; his good Fits being like short Intervals of

of Madneſs, which ſerve only to let the Madman into a Knowledge of his Diſeaſe. 303—307

3. This Temper is miſchievous to a *Man* in point of *Intereſt*, as well as *Eaſe*; not only by rendering him actually unfit ſor the Buſineſs of Life, but ſuſpected likewiſe of Hypocriſy and Diſſimulation. 307—309

4. It is utterly inconſiſtent with the Terms of *Salvation*. 309—312

II. To perſuade the Man that is thus bewildered to fix a ſure Principle of *Virtue* in his Mind, that may guide and govern him *throughout*, and make him *uniformly* wiſe,

1. Let him be ſure that his *Belief* is right, and ſound at Bottom: 313—315

2. Let him conſider well what that *particular Weight* was, that in the Days of his *Irreſolution* ſtill hung upon him, and clogged his virtuous Endeavours: 315, 316

3. Let him take care not to come within the Reach of any thing, that may unfaſten his Reſolutions, whilſt

whilst they are yet young and tender. 316, 317

4. To these *Endeavours* let him add fervent *Prayer*, that he may be *stablished*, *strengthened*, *settled*. 317, 318

SERMON. XII.

The Duty of living peaceably explained and recommended, in a Farewel Sermon at Saint *Bride*'s.

ROM. xii. 18.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all Men. 321

The Importance of the Duty in the Text, and the Seasonableness of pressing it upon the present Occasion. 321, 322

I. Wherein it consists, in relation to *Publick* and *Private* Men, *Opinions* and *Practice*. 323—327

II. The *Extent* of it, *with all Men*. 327—329

III. The

III. The Difficulty of practiſing it, intimated by theſe Words, *if it be poſſible*, and *as much as lieth in you.* 329

We are allowed to ſtand up in Defence of our *Fortune or good Name*, where *violent* Encroachments are made upon them; 330

And in Defence of the Honour of God, and the Intereſts of Virtue. 330, 331

But ſtill, as War has its Rules and Reſtraints, within which its Cruelties are bounded; much more in theſe Caſes ought we to have an Eye to Peace while we ſeem to overlook it. 331, 332

IV. The beſt Helps to the Practice of this Duty are,

1. To regulate our Paſſions: 333, 334
2. To moderate our Deſires, and ſhorten our Deſigns, with regard to the good Things of Life: 334, 335
3. To have a watchful Eye upon ourſelves in our firſt *Entrance* upon any Conteſt: 335, 336
4. Always to guard againſt the Intemperance of our *Tongue*, eſpecially

cially in relation to that natural Proneneſs it has towards publiſhing the Faults of others: 336, 337
5. To keep ourſelves from embarking in Parties and Factions: 337
6. To ſtudy to be quiet, by *doing our own Buſineſs* in our proper Profeſſion or Calling. 337, 338
7. Add Prayer to the Author of *Peace and Lover of Concord*, for the Fruits of his Spirit, which are *Love*, *Joy*, *Peace*, &c. 338

An Exhortation to the Practice of this Doctrine on the preſent Occaſion, *viz.* the Choice of a Lecturer. 339—348

ON

ON THE

MARTYRDOM

OF

King *CHARLES* I.

Preached at

St. *ANDREW*'s *HOLBORN.*

A SERMON ON THE MARTYRDOM OF King CHARLES I.

LUKE xxiii. 28.

Daughters of Jeruſalem, *weep not for me, but weep for yourſelves, and for your Children.*

THIS is a *Day of Trouble, of Rebuke, and Blaſphemy*; diſtinguiſhed in the Annals of our Nation, and the Calendar of our Church, by the ſad Suffering of an

SERM. I.

SERM. I. excellent Prince, who fell a Sacrifice to the Rage of his Rebellious Subjects; and by his Fall derived Infamy, Misery, and Guilt on them, and their sinful Posterity.

We are met here, to acknowledge our Sin, to express our publick Detestation of it, and to deprecate the Vengeance which hath pursued, and doth still, I fear, pursue us on the Account of it. In order to raise and improve these good Thoughts and Dispositions, I have pitch'd on the Words spoken by our Blessed Saviour in his sad Procession towards *Calvary*, as the Ground of our present Meditations,—*Daughters of* Jerusalem, *&c.*

Since Providence so order'd it, that one of the Lessons for that Day, whereon the Royal Martyr suffer'd, and which was read to him just before his ascending the Scaffold, should contain an Account of the Passion of our Lord; and the same Lesson is still by Authority appointed to be read in these annual Assemblies; I may be

be allowed, I hope, from the History of that Passion, written by St. *Luke*, to take the Words you have heard, and apply them to the Subject I am now about to handle, without incurring the Imputation of drawing unseemly Parallels, and without giving Offence to any, but those, who are Offended with the *Anniversary* itself, and with our solemn and devout *Manner* of observing it.

SERM. I.

As *Jesus* went to his Crucifixion, St. *Luke* tells us, that *there followed him a great Company of People, and of Women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your Children: For, behold, the Days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the Barren, and the Wombs that never bare, and the Paps that never gave suck!* His present Sufferings, and approaching Death, withheld him not from reflecting with Concern on the Calamities, which were rea-

SERM. I. dy to overtake others on his Account. And, becauſe the Women who followed him to *Calvary*, out of a Tenderneſs of Nature peculiar to their Sex, indulged themſelves in the loudeſt Expreſſions of Grief; therefore to *theſe* he particularly addreſſes the Admonition of the Text; directs them to turn their well meant Compaſſion from *him* upon *themſelves*; to reſerve all their Tears for a time, now at hand, when the whole Nation of the *Jews* would be called to a ſtrict Account for ſpilling his Blood, and be made an aſtoniſhing Inſtance of Divine Vengeance.

The good Prince, whoſe unhappy Fate we commemorate, did in *this*, as well as *other* reſpects, follow the Steps of *the great Captain of his Salvation, who was made perfect through Sufferings:* For the laſt Moments of his Life, which his Murderers allowed him, were employed in awakening a drowſy Nation into a Senſe of its Guilt, and a dread of its impending Puniſhment. Secure of his own Innocence

Heb ii. 10.

nocence and Happineſs, he ſeem'd to have conquer'd all Concern for himſelf; and, like a true Father of his People, was chiefly ſolicitous for the Peace and Welfare of his People. His dying Words breathed nothing but Pity and Tenderneſs towards his Subjects who were to ſurvive his Fall, and to feel the ſad Effects of it. And therefore to *thoſe*, who with weeping Eyes then beheld that bloody Scene, and to *us*, who with like Grief now look on, at a diſtance, may we ſuppoſe the Royal Sufferer (conſiſtently with the Character he then maintain'd) to ſay,—*Weep not for me; but weep for yourſelves, and for your Children.*

SERM. I.

This, I am ſure, is an Inſtruction, which the Day itſelf ſeems naturally to afford us, and which I ſhall, therefore, purſue in both its Branches; ſhewing you,

Firſt, That we miſplace our Grief, if we employ it in bewailing and lamenting

I.

SERM. I. lamenting our Martyr'd Sovereign; And,

II. *Secondly*, That the true End of these annual Humiliations is, *to weep for ourselves, and for our Children*; to deplore the Guilt which our Forefathers contracted by this inhuman Deed, and which, we have reason to fear, is not even yet fully expiated.

I. *First*, In the early Ages of the Church, the Custom was annually to observe those Days, on which the *Martyrs* were *crowned* (such was the Language of that Time) not with dejected Looks, or any outward Expressions of Sorrow; but with the Solemnities usual on *Birth-days* (and such also they were styled) even with all possible Instances of devout Exultation and Joy. Upon these Occasions, pious *Christians* flocked to the Places, where those faithful Servants of *Christ* slept, or had sealed the Truth of their Testimony with their Blood: *There* they

they held their ſacred Aſſemblies (as they afterwards built their Churches.) *There* they made their *Euchariſtick* Oblations, and celebrated their Feaſts of Love; gave Thanks to God for the exemplary Virtues and Graces, which adorned the Lives and Deaths of thoſe holy Perſons, and excited themſelves into like degrees of *Chriſtian* Zeal and Fervor.

SERM. I.

Their Behaviour in theſe Caſes ſhould be the Rule of *Ours*, and teach us to obſerve this Anniverſary in ſuch a manner, as may render it moſt honourable to the Dead, and moſt uſeful to the Living. To that end, it will become us, not vainly to indulge our Grief, or our Reſentments, in behalf of our much injured Prince; not fruitleſly to ſpend our time in lamenting his Misfortunes; but rather to employ it in magnifying the Grace of God, which enabled him ſo conſtantly to endure them, and ſo heartily to forgive the Authors of them; which armed him with ſuch a wondrous Degree

SERM. I. gree of Meekneſs and Patience; inſpired him with ſuch *Chriſtian* Magnanimity and Courage, as made him ſhine with a greater Luſtre in the Depth of his Sufferings, than he did in his moſt flouriſhing Circumſtances; and put off his Crown after a more glorious Manner, than he firſt wore it on the Day of his Coronation.

Indeed, the Mind of Man, filled with vain Ideas of worldly Pomp and Greatneſs, is apt to admire thoſe Princes moſt, who are moſt fortunate, and have filled the World with the Fame of their ſucceſsful Atchievements. But to thoſe, who weigh Things in the Balance of right Reaſon, and true Religion, it will, I am perſuaded, appear, that the Character of this excellent King, even while he was in his loweſt and moſt afflicted State, had ſomething in it, more truly Great and Noble, than all the Triumphs of Conquerors; ſomething, that raiſed him as far above the moſt proſperous Princes,

as

as they themſelves ſeem raiſed above the reſt of Mankind.

Many Kings there have been, as happy as all worldly Felicity could make them; and ſome of theſe have diſtinguiſhed themſelves as much by their Virtues, as their Happineſs. But the Poſſeſſors of thoſe Virtues, being ſeated on a *Throne*, diſplayed them from thence with all manner of Advantage; their good Actions appeared in the beſt Light, by reaſon of the high Orb, in which they moved, while performing them; whereas, the Royal Virtues, which we this Day celebrate, ſhone brighteſt in *Affliction*, and when all external Marks of Royal State and Dignity were wanting to recommend them. Others, perhaps, may have been as juſt, as beneficent, as merciful in the Exerciſe of their Royal Power, as this good King was; but none ſurely did ever maintain ſuch a majeſtick Evenneſs and Serenity of Mind, when deſpoiled of that Power, when ſtripped of every

SERM. I. every thing but a good Cauſe, and a good Conſcience; when deſtitute of all Hopes of Succour from his Friends, or of Mercy from his Enemies: *Then*, even *then*, did he poſſeſs his Soul in Peace, and patiently expect the Event, without the leaſt outward Sign of Dejection or Diſcompoſure. He remembered himſelf to be a King, when all the World beſide ſeemed to have forgotten it; when his Inferiors treated him with Inſolence, and his Equals with Indifference; when he was brought before that infamous Tribunal, where his own Subjects ſat as his Judges; and even when he came to die by their Sentence. — In *all* theſe ſad Circumſtances, on *all* theſe trying Occaſions, he ſpake, he did nothing, which miſbecame the high Character he bore, and will always bear, of a great King, and one of the beſt of *Chriſtians*. And this Mixture of unaffected Greatneſs and Goodneſs, in the Extremity of Miſery, was, I ſay, his peculiar and diſtinguiſhing Excellence

lence. Other Royal Qualities, that adorn Prosperity, he shared in common with others of his Rank; but in the decent and kingly Exercise of these passive Graces, he had, among the List of Princes, no Superior, no Equal, no Rival.

Indeed, the last Scene of his Sufferings was very dismal; and such, from which mere Human Nature, unsupported by extraordinary Degrees of Grace, must needs have shrunk back a little affrighted, and seemed desirous of declining. But those Succours were not wanting to him; for he went even through this last Trial, unshaken; and submitted his Royal Head to the stroke of the Executioner, with as much Tranquillity and Meekness, as he had born lesser Barbarities. The Passage through this *Red Sea* was bloody, but short; a Divine Hand strengthened him in it, and conducted him through it; and he soon reached the Shore of Bliss and Immortality.

He

SERM. I.

He is now at Reſt in thoſe Manſions, where *Tears are wiped from all Eyes, where there is neither Death, nor Pain, nor Crying*, and from whence *Sorrow and Sighs do flee away*. Wherefore, *Let us not mourn, refuſing to be comforted*; but let us rather (as thoſe early *Chriſtians* did on the like Occaſions) *rejoice with exceeding Joy:* Rendering to God our Thanks, that he hath been pleaſed in theſe laſt and moſt degenerate Times, to afford us ſuch an illuſtrious Pattern of Virtue and Goodneſs, as even the pureſt Ages of *Chriſtianity* would have looked up to with Reverence; that, by this Means, he hath given to looſe and prophane Men an Inſtance of the great Power of thoſe Religious Principles, which *did*, and which only *could* ſupport the Mind of this pious Prince under all the Indignities and Miſeries that befel him.

What an Honour is it to that Church, at whoſe Breaſt he firſt ſucked theſe Principles, to have been inſtrumental

mental in ſowing the firſt Seeds, from whence ſuch excellent Fruits afterwards ſprang! How ought ſhe to boaſt and triumph in this Thought, That a Prince, who excelled as much in the Knowledge, as in the Practice of Religion, ſhould be ſo firm and unmoveable an Aſſertor of her Doctrine, and Diſcipline, and Worſhip! which he *therefore* valued highly, becauſe he underſtood them thoroughly: That he ſhould go on to maintain *Her* Cauſe, even long after he deſpaired of maintaining his *Own*, or of being able to retrieve his loſt Crown and Dignity! and that, after he had thus defended her *Faith*, during his *Life*, he ſhould recommend it ſtill more at his *Death*, by dying *in* it, and *for* it!

But the more Excellent the Character of this Prince was, the more barbarous and brutal was the Rage by which he fell. Every Conſideration, which heightens his matchleſs Virtues, and endears his Memory to us, ſerves alſo to enhance the Wickedneſs of

SERM. I. of those Sons of *Belial*, who were the Instruments of his Ruin, and embrued their Hands in his Blood. And therefore, though we have no Occasion to *weep for him*, yet have we great Reason to *weep for ourselves, and for our Children*; for the Guilt which the Nation contracted, and the Infamy it underwent, by reason of that inhuman Deed, and for the other fatal Consequences, which *then did*, and which (as we have just Reason to fear) *may still* attend it. And this is the *second* Point, upon which I proposed to enlarge:

II. *Secondly*, That Nations, *as* Nations, are liable to Guilt, and consequently to Punishment; and such Punishments must be inflicted in this Life, in which alone those Nations and Communities subsist, and cannot be extended to another World, where all Kingdoms and People are to be swallowed up in the Kingdom of the Lamb, and to become *one Fold under one Shepherd*; and

and that the Punishments inflicted by God on Nations in this Life, may be altogether, or in part, deferred by God for some time, 'till the Iniquity of those Nations is full, and the Sinners grown ripe for Vengeance: These are all Points sufficiently evident from Reason and Scripture, and the History of the World; they need no solemn Proof, because they admit of no great Doubt. Little indeed is said on this Head in the Books of the New Testament, which were all written for the Use of private scattered *Christians*, e'er as yet any one entire Nation was converted, or any of the great Rulers of the World had submitted their Scepters to the Scepter of *Christ*: And, therefore, the Precepts there contained, relate chiefly, if not solely, to the Conduct of particular Persons, and are silent as to the Methods of God's dealing with publick Bodies and Societies of Men. And there was the less Occasion for any Instructions of this kind in the New Testament, because they had been given

SERM. I. so frequently and fully in the Old; the Prophetick Parts of which do every where inculcate these Doctrines, as the Matters of Fact, recorded in the Historical Books, illustrate and confirm them. And from thence, therefore, all our Observations must be drawn, concerning the Influence which a People's Sins have upon their Sufferings, and concerning the Measures of that Political Justice, by which God governs the World. And in truth, it was proper that the Directions of this kind should be given under the Institution of *Moses*; the *Letter* of which extended no farther than to the Concerns of this Life: Whereas the Duties, the Promises, and Threatnings of the *Gospel* do all look beyond the Grave, and are designed to regulate our Behaviour in *this* World, as it relates and leads to *another*.

The Doctrine then of God's Visiting Nations, *as* such, for Sins committed by them in that Capacity, being supposed; let us briefly apply it to the present

present Case, and see how far we ourselves are concerned in it. SERM. I.

That the Sin of this Day was *National*, is not to be denied; the Nation itself confesseth it, by appointing and observing these publick and stated Humiliations. It was under the Colour of a *National Authority*, that the *Rebellion* was first raised, and all along carried on, and at last consummated by the Erection of that infamous *High Court of Justice*, which gave the finishing Stroke to the successful Villanies of that Time, by taking away the Life of our Sovereign. Indeed, the greatest Part of the Nation abhorred that barbarous Act (and had their Power been equal to their Inclination, would have prevented it) but many of them had contributed to it too much, and too long before; and, having joined in all the *Steps* that led to the Murder of the King, could not at last, by expressing their Detestation of the *Crime*, excuse themselves entirely from the *Guilt* of it.

SERM. I. It was the *Nation* therefore, that *Sinned*; and Sinned with an high Hand, and with all the inflaming Circumſtances of Guilt and Aggravation. They made their way to the Completion of this Wickedneſs, through the moſt ſolemn *Engagements*, through all the Ties of Reaſon, and the Reluctances of *Conſcience:* The *Laws* of God and Man were but as *Withs* upon the Arms of *theſe Sampſons*, which they broke at pleaſure; and, when they had once overleaped the Mounds and Fences of Juſtice, were reſolved to think every Step lawful, which was neceſſary to juſtify thoſe they had already taken. Many Years they continued ſtedfaſtly purſuing
Jer. viii. 5. theſe unrighteous Meaſures; *they held faſt Deceit, and refuſed to return*; and after heaping Tranſgreſſion upon Tranſgreſſion, did at laſt, through the Blood of many of their *Fellow Subjects*, arrive at that of their *Sovereign*, and in the calmeſt and moſt deliberate manner perpetrate the black Deſign they had for ſome time meditated.

The

The *common* Methods, made use of by *rebellious Subjects* in the *Destruction of Princes*, did not please them; *Poison*, or a private *Assassination* was too *hasty* and *clandestine* a Way: They were resolved to have the Proceeding more *Publick*, and *Slow*, and *Solemn*; to carry it on by the *Forms of Law*, and with the *mock* Shew and Pageantry of *Justice* (a Way which crowned Heads had not hitherto been treated in) and since the *Crime* itself was *old*, and had been often repeated, to recommend it at least by the *Newness of the Invention:* In which respect, it must be confessed, that they *outstripped* all their *Rivals* in this Sort of Wickedness, even the bloodiest of their *King-killing Neighbours*. Indeed *new Inventions* for slaughtering Kings, and overturning States, are the *peculiar Reproach of this Nation*; of which we have *two* eminent Proofs upon Record, not to be paralleled in other Histories, the *Gun-powder Treason*, and *that of this Day*; *One* of them contrived by *Papists*,

SERM. I. *pists*, the *Other* by wild *Sectaries* and *Enthusiasts*; *neither* of them (God be thanked) by the Members of *the Church of England!*

Jer. v. 8. And, *Shall I not visit for such Things, saith the Lord? Shall not my Soul be avenged of such a Nation as this?* Shall a People sin in this remarkable Manner; and shall not that Sin be as remarkably punished? *It was* immediately, and in some measure punished by the fatal and necessary Consequences of it, by the sad Disorders and Confusions that attended it. For, *had Zimri Peace who slew his Master?* Did the Partners in this black Crime quietly reap the expected Fruits of it? No! they did not, they were soon displaced from the high Seat of Authority, which they had usurped; and gave way to other Usurpers, and to various Forms of Government, which prevailed in their turns. The feverish Nation rolled from one Posture, one Expedient to another, and found Rest in none. It then soon appeared, how great the Loss

2 Kings ix. 31.

was

was of their admirable Prince, and of their ancient Conſtitution, which periſhed with him. The People, who had miſcalled his mild and gentle Reign, Oppreſſion and Tyranny, found themſelves now *ruled with a Rod of Iron, and broken in Pieces like a Potter's Veſſel.* They had *complained* of Arbitrary Power *without Cauſe*, and now *ſmarted* under it *without Remedy.* To ſecure their *Liberty* and *Laws*, they had made this *Change*; which left both of them at the Mercy of *Standing Armies.* Thus *did their own Wickedneſs correct them, and their Backſlidings did reprove them!* They had pulled down a regular Primitive Church; and immediately Churches, Sects, and Religions, without Number, ſprang up in the room of it; inſtead of the honeſt Engliſh *Plainneſs* and *Simplicity*, a demure and ſly *Hypocriſy* prevailed; inſtead of ſober and well-weighed *Devotions*, all the Freaks and Rants of *Enthuſiaſm. Every* Way of worſhipping God, *but* the *true* One, was publickly

SERM. I.

Pſ. ii. 9.

Jer. ii. 12.

SERM. I. *allowed*; *all Men* were admitted to the Exercise of the *Sacred Function*, *but those* who were most *lawfully called* to it, and best *qualified* for it. A Loud and Causeless *Complaint* of Impositions on the *Consciences* of Men, in Things pertaining to God, had helped to ruin the *Church*; and now, every *little* Society pretending to that *venerable* Name, did the very *thing* they had complained of; imposed the Platform of their Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship, as Divine; and were for rooting out all that opposed, or did not comply with it. In the mean time, they, who preserved themselves free from this sort of Infection, were in as much Danger of swerving to a contrary Extreme, and of making Inferences to the Prejudice of Religion itself, which they saw perverted and prostituted to the worst Designs. Even *good* Men, at the sight of these prosperous *Hypocrites*, were ready to cry out in the Words of complaining *Jeremiah* : — *Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee*;

Jer. xii. 1, 2.

thee; yet let me talk with thee of thy Judgments: Wherefore doth the Way of the Wicked prosper? why are all they happy that deal very treacherously? Thou hast planted them; yea, they have taken root, they grow, they bring forth Fruit: Thou art near in their Mouth, and far (very far) *from their Reins! Then*, when these hypocritical Pretenders to Godliness abounded, did an opposite Spirit of open Levity and Profaneness begin to gain Ground upon a Serious and Religious People: *Then* were those *Seeds* of Infidelity first sown among us, which have since sprung up, and increased into a mighty *Harvest*. Our endless *Divisions* were a Scandal to the truly Pious, the Boast of *Rome*, and the Sport of *Atheists*: We were *made a Reproach to our Neighbours, a Scorn and a Derision to them that were round about us; a Bye-word among the Heathen, a Shaking of the Head among the People: We lay down in our Shame, and our Confusion covered us.* No Words can express the various Sorts of

SERM. I.

Psal. xliv. 13, 14.

SERM. I. of Misery, under which this Nation then groaned, *by reason of the Multitude of Oppressions* and Oppressors. *New Lords had Dominion over us*; the very *Refuse and Outcast of the People*; the Head became the Tail, and the Tail the Head; *the Child behaved himself proud again the Antient, and the Base against the Honourable.* From Violence and Bloodshed this new Model of Government had arisen; and the same Methods were requisite to cement and uphold it. Plunder and Rapine compleated the Devastations which War had begun: Armed Force decided Right, or executed the Sentence of those, who had no manner of Right to decide it: They were altogether *like Wolves, ravening the Prey to shed Blood, and to destroy Souls to get dishonest Gain. As the Voice of a Woman in Travail, as the Anguish of her that bringeth forth her first Child; such was then the Voice of the Daughter of Sion, that bewailed herself, that spread forth her Hands, saying; Woe*

Job. xxxv. 9.
Isa. iii. 5.
Ezek. xxii. 27.
Jer. iv. 31.

is

is me now! for my Soul is weary, be-cause of Murderers! SERM. I.

At last this Storm ceased, the Clouds dispersed, and the Sun shone out again in his Strength; the Royal Family returned, and with it our old Constitution in Church and State; the Regicides suffered, and *the Land* seemed to be *cleansed of the Royal Blood, that was shed therein, by the Blood of those that shed it.* Thus, for a while, we vainly imagined; but sad Experience soon undeceived us. Not many Years passed, before God did again empty, as it were, at once, all the Vials of his Wrath upon us: The Sword raged abroad; Fire, and Pestilence at home: And when this goodly City was laid in Ashes, and Desolation and Emptiness reigned in her Streets, doubtless pious Persons did often reflect, how much her misemployed Wealth, and misguided Zeal had formerly contributed to the Miseries and Confusions under which we laboured: And even they, whom a few Years Plenty and Pros-

SERM. I. Prosperity had lulled into a Forgetfulness of their Guilt, began then to lay their Hands upon their Hearts, and with *Joseph*'s Brethren to say: *Verily, we are guilty concerning our Prince; therefore is this Destruction come upon us!*

Gen. xlii. 21.

There was still a more terrible Judgment behind, which we were threatened with, and in some measure felt, tho' the Providence of God did not suffer it thoroughly to lay hold of us: I mean, the Advances made by Popery in a late Reign toward establishing itself among us. And this also was the Fruit of our former Iniquities; for (to speak a plain Truth, which, plain as it is, has been lately treated with Scorn and Derision by shameless Writers) the Attempt of introducing a *Foreign Religion* was but too natural a Consequence of our forcing the *Royal Family* to take Shelter in *Foreign Countries*; where they might be allured by the tempting Appearances of a splendid Worship, and a regular Hierarchy, and by

by glorious but empty Pretences to Universality and Infallibility; especially at a Time, when the good *Frame* of our Ecclesiastical Polity here at *home* was shattered and dissolved, and the *Honour of our Sion was laid low in the Dust.* Still therefore our Punishment was from ourselves; nor was God *a hard Master* in inflicting it; for we *reaped* only *what we had sowed, and gathered what we had strawed*; and the *first* Subversion of our Constitution involved us in all the Confusions and Miseries, in which we long *afterwards* laboured. But *that* Storm also blew over, and Times of *Liberty* succeeded, wherein we promised ourselves the settled Enjoyment of all manner of Advantages and Blessings. Can we say, that those Hopes were not in great measure defeated by the Spirit of Irreligion and Libertinism, which then, and ever since that Time notoriously prevailed; by those intestine Factions and Discords, by which we have been torn; and that foreign War, under the Weight

SERM. I.

SERM. I. Weight of which we for more than twenty Years groaned? till the vaſt Expence of Blood and Treaſure, which it occaſioned, made us ready to cry out in the pathetick Words of the Prophet, *O thou Sword of the Lord, how long will it be e'er thou be quiet? Put thyſelf up in thy Scabbard; reſt, and be ſtill!*

Jer. xlvii. 6.

And when that Sword reſted in its Scabbard, was not the Manner of Sheathing it as unwelcome to us, as even the Havock it had occaſioned, when naked and drawn! Was not the good Queen (now with God) the Subject of malicious, but groundleſs Reproaches on that very Account? Did we not murmur at the Bleſſing, and bring ourſelves, at laſt, with great Difficulty to reliſh and approve it?

But may we not now at length hope, that all is well with us, and that the ill Conſequences of ſpilling the Royal Blood of this Day are ceaſed, the Anger of God appeaſed, and our National Guilt utterly pardoned? How can that be

be, until the Nation itſelf hath manifeſtly repented? And the Repentance of a Nation for any Sin is beſt teſtified by its general Abhorrence of the Principles and Practices that cauſed it. And are we able in this manner to purge ourſelves of this Day's Tranſgreſſion? Do we, indeed, give evident Proofs, that we heartily and univerſally deteſt it? If that be really our Caſe, *what meaneth then this Bleating of the Sheep in our Ears, and this Lowing of the Oxen which we hear?* How comes it to paſs, that theſe Anniverſary Humiliations are ſo openly ſpoken againſt, ill treated and derided? Why has the horrid *Guilt* of the Day been *leſſened* in Publick Diſcourſes, and repreſented with all manner of Alleviations and *Softnings?* As if it were unpopular and imprudent, to paint ſuch a Villany to the Life, or to ſpeak of it in ſuitable Terms of Ignominy and Reproach! Why have the *Doctrines*, which *paved* the Way to this bloody Deed been freely revived, embraced, and cheriſhed;

1 Sam. xv. 14.

SERM. I. and *those*, for which the Sufferers in the Royal Cause underwent all manner of Persecutions, been discountenanced and exploded? Why has the Spirit of *Liberty* been indulged to an outrageous Degree of *Licentiousness*; the Reverence due to Thrones shaken by mean and insolent Pens; and Contempt poured on the sacred Character of Princes, *as though they had not been anointed with Oyl?* Why have Lectures, in such sacred Places as these, been more than once read to the People, not only with Permission, but Applause, instructing them how *near* they might approach towards the *Sin* of Rebellion, without *actually* incurring the Guilt of it? And why have impious Wretches by their *Mock Feasts* ridiculed our *Solemn Fasts*, without being punished, or (which is yet a worse Sign) even without being detected in order to Punishment? Certainly, these are no good *Proofs* of our Abhorring the Sin of the Day; and why then should we flatter ourselves with the Thought, that

2 Sam. i. 21.

that God hath left off to abhor, and will no longer continue to chastise us for the Sake of it? *Truly* (to use our Saviour's Words) *ye bear witness, that ye allow the Deeds of your Fathers; for they indeed killed the Prophets, and ye build their Sepulchres*; that is, Ye pay some outward Respect to their Ashes, some ceremonious Regard to their Memories; but without renouncing the Principles, and abominating the Practices, that led to the spilling that *Righteous Blood*, which, therefore, we have Reason to fear, may be *required even of this Generation.* When, and in what manner, God will require it, he alone knows. But if we consider the Height of all Sorts of Wickedness, to which we are now arrived; the open Contempt of Religion, and Scorn of sacred Persons and Things, that reigns among us; the intestine Discords, by which we are torn at home; the Dangers which have threatened us from abroad, and (however we may say, *Peace, Peace*, to ourselves) still

SERM. I.

Luke xi. 48.

SERM. I. do threaten us, we have just Cause to apprehend, that the compleat Measure of our Iniquity is almost filled up, and that the Day of our Visitation is not far off.

But do not thou, *O Lord, to whom Vengeance belongeth*, do not thou deal with us according to our Deserts; *be not displeased at us for ever, neither stretch out thy Wrath from one Generation to another!* Command thy *destroying Angel, when he goeth through*
Ch. ix. 4. *the City* (as the Prophet *Ezekiel* speaks) *to set a Mark upon the Forehead of all those that sigh, and that cry for the Abomination, which hath been done in the midst thereof*; and either to spare the whole for their Sakes; or, at least, not to smite *the Righteous* together *with the Wicked!* Make us deeply sensible of this, and all other our great Enormities, and of thy wondrous Lenity and For-
Luke xix. 42. bearance! *Teach us, even yet in this our Day* (if it be possible) *the Things that belong to our Peace, e'er they be hid from our Eyes!* Teach us by a Re-

Reflection on *past* Calamities, to prevent *new* ones, and to avoid those Rocks and Shelves, on which our Fore-fathers were shipwrecked! SERM. I.

Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, through the Merits of that *Blood, which speaketh better Things than the Blood of* Abel!

To him, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all Honour, Adoration, and Thanks, now, and for evermore. Amen.

THE

Wicked Lives of *Christians*

No ARGUMENT against the

TRUTH of Christianity.

The wicked Lives of CHRISTAINS *no Argument against the Truth of* Christianity.

A

SERMON

Preached at

St. JAMES's Chapel.

APRIL 26, 1713.

1 TIM. vi. 1.

——*That the Name of God, and his Doctrine be not blasphemed.*

THE *Purity* and *Perfection* of the *Christian Morality*, considering the Meanness of the Persons who pu- SERM. II.

SERM. II.

blished that Doctrine, is a sure Argument of its divine Original and Authority. But then the *Lives* of many *Christians*, led in a Way so little answerable to the *Precepts of Christ*, are a mighty Dishonour to our Religion, and give Occasion, to those who seek Occasion, to reproach and blaspheme it.

What signifies it, says the Libertine, or indeed how can one be satisfied, that the Gospel is of heavenly Extraction; when we see, it hath no more Efficacy and Influence on the Hearts and Lives of those who profess it, than other Religions that are of mere Human Contrivance; when there is as much Impiety, and Vice of all Sorts among those *that name the Name of Christ*, as amongst the *Mahometans* and *Heathens?*

This popular Objection St. *Paul* appears to have had much upon his Thoughts, and doth therefore frequently press his new Converts in this and other Epistles, to distinguish themselves by a becoming Sanctity of Life and Manners; for *this* Reason, among *others*,

others, That the Name of God and his Doctrine be not blasphemed. SERM. II.

If there were great Occasion for such Exhortations *then*, there is much greater *now*; when the Manners of *Christians* are degenerated so far, not only from the *Precepts* of *Christ*, but even from the Pattern set by those first Believers; and when there are even among those, who call themselves *Christians*, *some*, as ready to lay hold of this Objection, and to urge it in Prejudice of our Religion, as any of the most determined Heathens, even *Porphyry*, *Celsus*, or *Julian* himself, were.

From the Words therefore, a proper Occasion will be given me to enquire,

First, What Ground there is for a Complaint of the extreme Wickedness of Men now under the Evangelical Dispensation. I.

Secondly, Allowing the Complaint to be just, how little Reason there yet would II.

SERM. II. would be for turning it to the Disadvantage of Christianity itself. And,

III. *Thirdly*, What are the Inferences that may more justly and naturally be deduced from it.

I. *First*, I am to consider, What *just* Ground or Colour there may be for a Complaint of the exceeding Wickedness of Men now under the Christian Dispensation.

And here it may with Truth be observed, to the Advantage of our holy Religion, that, as bad as Men are under it, they would have yet been worse without it; since, upon a just Comparison of *Christians*, even in these later Times, with the Enemies of the Cross of *Christ*, it will, I am persuaded, be found, that the Manners of the *one* are not quite so corrupt and vicious as those of the *other*. There may perhaps be some *particular Christians* more abandoned to all Sorts and Degrees of Impiety, than any even of the most

most profligate Heathens (for which Instances I shall account in what follows) but surely *Christendom*, as to the *general* State of it, is not equally scandalous in this respect, with those Parts of the World, that are Strangers to *Christ*; those Parts of it, I mean, where the Incentives to Luxury, Ambition, and every Sort of Vice do equally abound.

SERM. II.

And therefore the aggravating Descriptions that have been given of this Matter by some pious and pathetical Pens, are not to be interpreted too strictly. The Faults of *Christians* are obvious and manifest to those of the same Faith, and strike our Imaginations strongly on the account of their Nearness; whereas the Vices of the Heathen World, being practised at a Distance, and coming to our Knowledge by rare and uncertain Reports, do therefore make but faint Impressions on our Minds.

The Rule, by which *Christians* are obliged to walk, is so excellent, and they

SERM. 11.

they are thereby so fully and clearly informed of the whole Extent of their Duty; the promised Assistances are so mighty, and the Rewards so vast, by which they are animated to Obedience; that *their* Transgressions, as they are attended with a deeper *Guilt*, so must needs appear to be of a more prodigious *Size*, than those of *other* Men. And it is no wonder therefore, if, on *both* these Accounts, good and holy Persons have spoken of them with a particular Degree of Detestation and Horror.

And as the *Vices* of *Christians* are, for these Reasons, open and glaring, so their *Virtues* oftentimes disappear and lie hid. The profound Humility and Self-denial, which the Christian Religion first enjoined, leads the true Disciples of *Christ*, in the Exercise of the chief Gospel Graces, to shun the Applause and Sight of Men, as much as is possible. Hence, some of the best *Christians* are least known to be such, because they make the least Noise and

Shew

Shew with their Goodness. There is nothing extraordinary or singular in their Manner of Life and Behaviour; no Ostentation of Sanctity in Look, Word, or Deed. Notwithstanding their Domestick Severities, yet, when they come abroad, they *anoint the Head, and wash the Face, that they appear not unto Men to fast.* They sound no Trumpet before their Alms, or other good Works; but endeavour to perform them with that Secresy, which our Saviour recommended, when he said, *Let not thy Right Hand know what thy Left Hand doth.*

SERM. II.

Matt. vi. 17.

Matt. vi. 3.

And of this there is *One*, though a very late, yet so remarkable an Instance, that for the Honour of our holy Faith, I think it may deserve to be particularly mentioned; the Instance, I mean, of the Author of that excellent Book, the *Whole Duty of Man*; who took not more Care to do good to the World, than he did to conceal the Doer of it; being contented to approve himself to him, and him only,

who

SERM. II. *who seeth in secret*, and resolved that the Praise of Men, whether in his Life, or after his Death, should be no Part of his Reward.

On these, and such Accounts as these, I say, Vice *seems* to have the Odds of Virtue among *those*, *who name the Name of Christ*, much more than it really *hath*. However, after all the Abatements that have been, or can be made in this Case, still it must be owned, That the Wickedness of *Christians* is exceeding great, and, considering the special Helps towards Holiness, which they above the rest of the World enjoy, very amazing. Even good Men, when they find all the powerful Means of Grace proposed in the Gospel, to have so little Success, are apt to be somewhat startled at it; and ill Men do not fail to make a very ill Use of it, and to turn it to the Disadvantage of Christianity itself.

II. *Secondly*, That they are very unreasonable in so doing, I am in the next place to shew. For,

1. The

1. The holiest and purest Doctrine imaginable is *but Doctrine* still; it can only instruct, admonish, or persuade; it cannot compel. The Gospel Means of Grace, powerful as they are, yet are not, and ought not to be irresistible. They are Moral Causes, which do not violently constrain our Wills and Affections; but only by gentle Methods solicit and incline them. They work not like a Medicine, or a Charm, without our Concurrence and Co-operation. And therefore let the Discoveries of our Duty and Happiness now made, be never so bright and clear, yet a Multitude of *Christians* may still so live, as if there was no such Discoveries. And this is no greater a Wonder, than it is, that the Lusts and Passions of frail Men should often get the better of their Reason; and the truest Sense and Knowledge of our Duty give way in the Presence of mighty Temptations; which always hath been, always will, and must be the Case, while Human Nature consists (as it doth) of

SERM. II.

jarring

SERM. II. jarring Principles, and the corrupt Part of us is (as it generally is) the prevailing Ingredient in the Composition.

Let the *Gospel* have never so *little* Success in promoting Holiness, yet all who have considered it, must own, that it is in itself *as* fit as any thing that can be imagined for that Purpose, and incomparably *more* fit than any *other* Course that ever was taken. If therefore the desired *End* be not attained, we must not blame the *Means*, which are confessedly apposite and proper, but the *Men*, who refuse or neglect to make use of them. The Rules of Health, and the Prescriptions of the Physician may be good; and yet few be the better for them, if few strictly observe them. It is no Disparagement to the Art, if those receive no great Benefit from it, who do not surrender themselves up to the Methods it prescribes.

Did *Philosophy* suffer in the Opinion of wise Men, on the Account of the *Debaucheries* that reigned in those Ages,

Ages, wherein it flourished most among the *Grecians* and *Romans?* Was it then thought a good *Inference*, that, because Men were very dissolute, when Wisdom was at the Height, and the Light of Reason shone brightest, *therefore* Wisdom and Reason were of little *Use* towards making Men *Virtuous?* No! the Excellence and Fitness of the Rule was universally acknowledged; and all the Blame was laid on those, who did not comply with it. Object in the like manner against *natural* Religion to a *Deist*, and he will give you the like Answer. And why then should he not receive the same Apology for *revealed* Religion, in its Turn? If the ill Conduct of those, who embrace any Rule of Life and Manners, be a reasonable Exception against the Rule itself, there's an End of all Rules whatsoever; since none there are, from which most of those, who in *Theory* approve them, do not in *Practice* mightily swerve and decline. But,

SERM. II.

SERM. II.

2. The present Wickedness of *Christians* cannot be owing to any Defect in the Doctrine of *Christ*, nor be urged as a Proof of the real Inefficacy of it towards rendering Men holy; because there *was* a Time, when it had all the Success of this kind, that could be expected; the Time, I mean, of its earliest Appearance in the World; when the Practice of the Generality of *Christians* was a just Comment on the Precepts of *Christ*; and they could appeal from their Doctrines to their Lives, and challenge their worst Enemies to shew any remarkable Difference between them. When they were, as the Apostle speaks, *blameless, and harmless, the Sons of God, without Rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse Nation, among whom they shone as Lights in the World.* When they were so far from Injustice and Wrong, and the several wicked Arts of Deceiving, that in the vast Multitude of Converts, *No Man said that ought was his own, but they had all things common*, and were

Phil. ii. 15.

Acts iv. 32.

were not only of one *Faith*, and of one *Worship*, but *of one Heart, and of one Soul.* Now, if the Efficacy and Power of the Christian Doctrine must be tried by its Fruits, why may we not have leave to take it at its first setting out, and to argue, that the most immediate and nearest must have been the most natural and genuine Effects of it? He that would try the Goodness of a Spring, should go to the Fountain Head itself, and not judge of it by Streams from thence at a great Distance derived, which many other Waters may perhaps have fallen into during its Course, and many impure Mixtures have defiled.

SERM. II.

The Gospel is the same *now*, as it was *then*; equally *the Power of God unto Salvation*, equally *mighty in pulling down of strong Holds*; and therefore, that it doth not still produce the *same* Effects, must be owing, not to any Ineptitude or Defect in the *Means*, but to *other* Causes and Considerations,

Rom. i. 16.

2 Cor. x. 4.

SERM. II.

some of which I shall now briefly explain. And,

1. There must needs be a great Disparity between the *first Christians*, and those of these *latter* Ages; because Christianity was the Religion of their Choice. They took it up, while it was persecuted, and they could have no other Inducement to receive it, but a Conviction of its Excellence, which they attained by impartial and diligent Enquiries; the Effect of which was, that the holy Precepts and precious Promises of the Gospel made a lively and durable Impression on them. Whereas Christianity with us is generally not a Matter of Choice, but of Fashion and good Luck. We are born, where it is professed; and we fall into it, as we do into other prevailing Opinions and Customs, of Course; and no wonder therefore, if it floats only on the Surface of our Minds, if it *takes* not *Root downwards*, and consequently doth not *bring Fruit upwards*, in our Life and Practice. For the Gospel, tho'

Is. xxx. 31.

tho' it be the great Instrument of Holiness, yet can make those alone Holy, who consider and weigh it, and fasten its holy Rules upon their Hearts and Consciences by Meditation and Study.

2. Another Account of the great Degeneracy of *Christians* may be drawn from Mens erecting *new* Schemes of Christianity, which interfere with the true and genuine Account of it. *Some* Men rely on the mere *Externals* of Religion, on *Masses*, and *Pilgrimages*, *Indulgences*, *and bodily Austerities:* And if all *these* fail, they have a Reserve still, in the Merits and Intercessions of *Saints* and *Angels*. *Others*, who call themselves *Christians*, have no regard for the *Dead Letter* of Scripture, but regulate themselves by a certain *Light within*, by unaccountable Impulses and Inspirations. There are yet *others*, who hope to be saved by a bare Act of Recumbency on the *Merits* of *Christ*, and by the *Free* Grace of the Gospel, without observing the *Law of Works*, without being tied to the E-

SERM. II.

lements of Bondage, and carnal Ordinances.

Now *these Schemes* (and the same we might say of some *others)* subvert the true *Gospel Scheme* of Salvation, by *Repentance from dead Works*, and becoming a New Creature; and as far as they do so, must needs undermine the Interest of Virtue and Goodness, and smooth the Way towards the Commission of Wickedness. If all the World embraced the Doctrine of *Christ* in its Simplicity and Purity, without adultering it by false Mixtures, it would be far more Operative and Effectual than now it is, towards reforming Mens Lives, and sanctifying their Natures. But when they frame to themselves a Gospel, which *Christ* and his Apostles never preached, and expect to be saved on any other Terms and Conditions than those God hath proposed; 'tis no wonder if from such an Evil Root, as Evil Fruit arises; and they grow as corrupt in their Practice, as they are in their Opinions.

The

The same may be said of some over-easy and loose, or over strict and rigorous Decisions in Matters of Conscience. Many *modern Casuists* have bent their Thoughts, and strained their Wits, in order to *soften* the Severity of the Gospel Morals, and to bring them down, as near as they can, not only to the *Infirmities*, but even the *Vices* of Human Nature. They have invented an Art of *Lying* without *Sinning*: They have allowed a Man to act on *that* Side of an Opinion, which he is satisfied is *false*, so it carry but any Shew of *Probability* with it; and they have determined it to *be* probable, if two or three grave Writers of Note have espoused it. They have made good *Ends* capable of Sanctifying the worst and most forbidden *Means*; have declared it not necessary for a Man to exercise more than *one* Act of Love towards God in his *whole* Life-time, or to be contrite for his Sins, but on his *Death bed*. And these are the Positions, not only of a few, obscure, but

SERM. II.

of very many, and very celebrated Authors; and cannot therefore but go on a great way towards debauching the Minds of all such as have any Reverence for those *Casuists*.

On the other side, good, but mistaken Men have sometimes carried the Doctrine of the Gospel to a very severe and astonishing Height; and framed from thence such Rules of Life, and Determinations in Morality, as directly opposed the first and most innocent Inclinations of Human Nature. And in this they thought, they had done God and Men good service; but the Event has disproved them. For some Persons finding Religion represented as so melancholy and sour a thing, have concluded, that God, the Author of our Nature, could never be the Author of so unnatural and extravagant a Scheme; and have thereupon rejected it at once, and set themselves loose from all the Ties of Morality. Others, still adhering to the Truth of the Doctrine, have yet been so far discouraged by

by the uncomfortable and forbidding Look of it, as to lay aside all Hopes either of duly practising or relishing it; and have therefore resolved rather *to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season*, and run the Venture of their future Happiness, than be certainly miserable here, for fear of being so hereafter. And a third Sort there are, who have endeavoured to raise their Practice up to these Speculations; but failing (as how could they but fail?) have sunk into Religious Despair, concluded themselves Reprobates, out of the Favour of God, and a State of Salvation.

SERM. II.

Heb. xi. 25.

So that too *easy* and too *severe* Decisions have *alike* done Disservice to Religion; *These* perhaps have frightened near as many from the Prosecution of *Virtue*, as *Those* have allured to the Commission of *Vice*; but the True Doctrine of the Gospel, which steers between these Extremes, is not answerable for the Excesses on either side, and ought not therefore to be blasphemed

SERM. II. phemed on the account of them. We may add in the

3d Place, That 'tis not to be expected, but that, where *Christians* are wicked, they should be rather worse than other Men; for this very Reason, because they have more Help towards becoming better, and yet live in the Contempt or Neglect of them. Those excellent Rules of Life, which they will not suffer to do them Good, must for that very Reason do them Harm, if they set their Faces against so plain a Revelation of their Duty, and resolve to Sin in Defiance of it. For, *if the Light that is in them be Darkness, how great is that Darkness?*

Matt. vi. 23.

How great, even according to the natural Course and Tendency of Things, whereby what is good, when corrupted, grows bad in proportion to its former Goodness: How much greater, in respect of the just Judgments of God, who punishes such Persons with the total Dereliction of his Spirit, and a Penal Blindness; *giving those up to a Reprobate*

Rom. i. 28.

Reprobate Mind, who thus hold the Truth in Unrighteousness. SERM. II.

Lastly, The Faith of *Christ* suffers much from the ill Lives of those, who have nothing of Christianity but the *Name*; and are, whilst they reproach it for the ill Conduct of its Professors, themselves the greatest Reproach to it. Set aside the Disorders of the *almost Christians*, and of such as, whatever they may outwardly profess, do not sincerely and heartily love *our Lord Jesus*; and one great Occasion of Blaspheming the Doctrine of *Christ* will be removed. 'Tis very hard therefore to make our Faith answerable for the ill Manners of those, who do not in good Earnest receive it; but much harder still, that those very Men should press the Objection most eagerly, without whose loose and immoral Lives, there would not be near so much Ground and Colour for it.

This is as if *Catiline* should have declaimed against the Debaucheries of *Rome*, whilst he and his Accomplices were

SERM. II. were in the Midst of it, and had contributed to bring it to that Pitch of Wickedness, which they had complained of.

Many other instructive Reflections might be suggested on these Heads: But thus much may suffice to shew, How far there is any real Occasion for a Complaint of the exceeding Wickedness of Men, now under the Christian Dispensation; and then, supposing the Complaint just, how little Reason there would be, to turn it to the Disadvantage of Christianity itself. It remains, that I should point out to you, on my

III. *Third* General Head, some more proper and natural Inferences that may be drawn from it. They are *many* and *weighty:* But I will not detain you further than by the Mention of a few of them.

And, 1. This should be so far from shocking our Faith, that it ought, on the contrary, to confirm and strengthen it,

it. For the universal Degeneracy of *Christians* in these latter Days was plainly and punctually foretold by *Christ* and his Apostles. *When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find Faith on the Earth?* said our Saviour. *Now the Spirit speaketh* (says St. *Paul* in his first Epistle to *Timothy*) *that in the latter Times some shall depart from the Faith, giving Heed to seducing Spirits, and Doctrines of Devils; speaking Lies in Hypocrisy, having their Consciences seared with a hot Iron.* And in his second Epistle, *This know, that in the last Days perilous Times shall come; for Men shall be Lovers of their own selves, Covetous, Boasters, Proud, Blasphemers:* To which he adds a large Catalogue of the blackest and worst of Sins which should then abound. And parallel Passages to these are also to be found in St. *Peter*'s and St. *Jude*'s Epistles. Now *the Testimony of Jesus is that Spirit of Prophecy*; and if he therefore and his Apostles by that Spirit of Prophecy forewarned us of this Event, it should not, methinks, lessen

SERM. II.

Luke xviii. 8.

ch. iv. 1, 2.

ch. iv. 12.

ch. iii. 1, 2.

Rev. xix. 10.

SERM. II. lessen our Esteem of their Doctrine, to see that Prediction fulfilled.

Nay, the vicious Lives of the Generality of *Christians* is an Argument for the Truth of Christianity on another Account. For the professed Design of God in revealing it, being to reform the World, and that Design being so remarkably defeated; were not our Religion founded on a Rock, on the most apparent Reason, and most incontestable Miracles, it must, a long time ago, have sunk under the Weight of this *single* Prejudice. *Had this Counsel, or this Work been of Men, it would*, under such a Disadvantage, *have* certainly *come to nought; but it being of God, nothing can overthrow it.* We may from hence in the

Acts v. 38, 39.

2d Place, Take occasion to consider the monstrous Degree of Pravity and Perverseness, that is hid in the Heart of Men, and to account for the Rise of it. It is plainly such, and so great, we see, as to be Proof against the brightest Discoveries of God's Will, and our Duty;

Duty; such as no Rules can rectify, no Endeavours can reform. SERM. II.

And this *One* Reflection, duly attended to, would satisfy us, that we are not now in our *Natural State*, and as we came forth from the Hands of God; but fallen and degenerated from primitive Perfection. For can it enter into the Heart of Man to conceive, that the noblest Part of the visible Creation should, in its Original Frame and Constitution, be the most Imperfect and Faulty? That Man should have been created by God, with such violent Tendencies to Evil, and such rooted Aversions from Goodness, as at present discover themselves in him? Even without the Light of Revelation, it would, on this very Account, be highly reasonable for us to believe (what those, who reasoned best among the Heathens, the Scholars of *Socrates* did believe) that some Change must needs have happened in our Faculties and Natures, since they were first formed; and that our Souls are now placed in a

State,

SERM. 11. State, not of natural Dignity and Excellence, but of Probation and Recovery.

3. It will be a *third* good Use of what has been discoursed, if we learn from thence, not to measure Doctrines by Persons, or Persons by Doctrines; that is, not to make the One a compleat Rule and Standard, whereby to judge of the Goodness or Badness of the Other. I cannot now duly explain this Reflection, and shall therefore employ it only in order to wipe off a Reproach, that hath been sometimes cast on that excellent *Church*, of which we are Members; as if ill Livers abounded more than ordinarily in *her* Communion. I trust in God, the Aspersion is utterly false and groundless; the mere Effect of Malice, Envy, or Design. But, were it never so true, yet would not this be a Touchstone to try her Doctrines by; since for the same Reason that the *Wickedness* of *Christians* in *general* is no Argument against the *Truth* of Christianity, the Wickedness

to

to be found in any *particular* Society of *Christians*, can be no Objection against the *Doctrines* particularly professed in that Society. By *Scripture* and by *Reason* Religious Opinions are to be examined; and not by the Lives and Practice of those who espouse them.

SERM. II.

However, since the World is for the most part composed of such as do not reason rightly, but judge merely by outward Appearances; since Mankind are generally so made, that the holiest Religion in the World must needs suffer in their Opinions, on the Account of the ill Lives of those who profess it; let us therefore make this

4th and last Use of what has been said, To excite ourselves from thence to do what in us lies towards removing this Scandal from the Christian Faith at large, and from that particular Church of *Christ* to which we belong; both by living *Ourselves*, as becomes our holy Religion; and by influencing *Others*, as we have Ability and Oppor-

SERM. II. tunity, to live as *we* do; that so both *we*, and *they* may *adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all Things*; may render it lovely and desirable in the Eyes of all Men, even its fiercest Enemies and Opposers; *having our Conversation* (as the Apostle speaks) *honest among the Gentiles* (and those who are worse than *Gentiles*; *Christians* in Name and Profession, but at the Bottom hardended and seared Unbelievers) *that, whereas they speak against us as Evil-doers, they may by our good Works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the Day of Visitation.*

Tit. ii. 10.

1 Pet. ii. 12.

The *primitive Christians* (as you have heard) appealed freely from their *Doctrines* to their *Lives*, in Confirmation of the Truth of Christianity: *We*, on the contrary, are forced to appeal from our *Lives* to our *Doctrines*; and to shelter ourselves under the indisputable Goodness of the Rule we embrace, whilst we are guilty of very many, and very great Deviations from it. Let us be ashamed to make use of this Argument

gument any longer, and resolve to render our *Actions* and *Opinions* perfectly *consistent*; that so our *Religion* may appear to be, not a Notional *System*, but a vital and fruitful *Principle of Holiness*; and we may save not only our own Souls, but the Souls of many others also, who shall be won over to the *Obedience of the Faith*, by *observing our good Conversation in* Christ Jesus:

SERM. II.

1 Pet. iii. 16.

To whom, with the Father, and blessed Spirit, be ascribed all Majesty, Might, and Praise, now and for ever. Amen.

THE

FEAR of GOD

A Proper and Sufficient

Motive to HOLINESS.

The Fear of God a Motive to Holineſs.

A

SERMON

Preached at

St. JAMES's Chapel.

March 20, 1718-19.

PHIL. vi. 1.

Work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling.

SERM. III.

THE wiſe and good Author of our Nature, foreſeeing that, in this degenerate and corrupted State of it, the Rules of Duty he preſcribed, would not, without great Difficulty and Reluctance be complied with, hath been graciouſly

SERM. III.

pleaſed to addreſs himſelf, not to our *Reaſon* only, but our *Paſſions* alſo, and to enforce his *Commands*, by propoſing, together with them, ſuch *Motives* and *Conſiderations*, as (he *knew*) would have the *greateſt* Influence towards determining our Choice; towards ſecuring, and enlivening our Chriſtian Obedience. And the moſt operative of theſe Motives ſeems to be *that*, which applies itſelf to our *Fears*, and urges upon us the ſtrict Practice of Virtue, by the *Threats* of divine Vengance, which will certainly attend our Diſobedience. This Conſideration the ſacred Writers frequently inculcate; and particularly St *Paul* in the Words of the Text, wherein he exhorts the *Philippians* to *work out their own Salvation with Fear and Trembling*.

On which Words I intend to build this plain, but uſeful Propoſition, That "A *Fear* of God's Wrath, and of eter-"nal Puniſhment, is a *proper* and *ſuffi-"cient* Motive to lead Men to Holi-"neſs." This ſeems to be a very *evi-dent* Truth; and yet thoſe, who have

to

to deal with ſcrupulous Conſciences, know, that ſome very pious and well-meaning *Chriſtians*, do in good earneſt doubt of it; and will not allow themſelves to be in a *Regenerate* Eſtate, or to have a ſure Title to the Divine Favour, becauſe their Repentance wholly took its Riſe at the firſt, and hath ſince perhaps in ſome meaſure received its Growth and Increaſe from that baſe and ſlaviſh Principle of *Fear*, to which, they imagine the true *Sons of Adoption* and *the Elect of God* are always Strangers. SERM. III.

To remove the Scruples, under which ſuch good, but miſtaken Men labour, ſhall be the Buſineſs of my preſent Diſcourſe: Wherein I will endeavour,

Firſt, By ſome *general* Reflections to leſſen the ill Opinion, which theſe Perſons entertain of themſelves; And then proceed, I.

Secondly, To *prove* more directly, that the Principle, from which their Repent- II.

SERM. III. Repentance and Obedience hath ſprung, is ſuch, as they may ſecurely rely on. And,

I. *Firſt*, I deſire them to conſider, that although the Goſpel doth (almoſt in every Page of it) repreſent to us the Neceſſity of Repentance in *general*; yet, as to any particular Motive, from whence this Change of Mind and Manners muſt *neceſſarily* flow, it is altogether ſilent. Which ſeems to intimate this Truth, That if a Man be but ſincerely and throughly Good, it matters not much out of what Principle he *firſt* became ſo: *Elſe* the Scripture, which ſo often and earneſty preſſes upon us the *one*, would have laid ſome Streſs on the *other* alſo. It is ſaid indeed that we muſt *Love the Lord our God with all our Heart, and with all our Soul, and with all our Mind, and with all our Strength*; that we muſt *walk in his Ways, and keep all his Commandments*; but it is no where determined, from what *Motive* this our *Love* and *Obedience* muſt

Luke x. 27.

muſt *originally* ſpring, in order to find Acceptance with God. And therefore, where no expreſs Directions are given, there the Divine Goodneſs ſeems to have indulged a Latitude. And why then ſhould we make the *Way that leads to* Eternal *Life*, *narrower*, and the *Gates ſtraiter*, than God himſelf appears to have made it? But,

2. It ſeems a little unequal and preposterous in theſe Perſons, to lay ſo great a Streſs on their *Fears* in *One* Reſpect, when they diſtruſt them ſo much in *Another*. For the State of their Caſe is plainly this, — That by a *Dread* of Divine Vengeance they were at firſt ſcared from the Practice of Vice, and led into the Paths of Virtue: And it is the *ſame* religious Dread that now inclines them to ſuſpect, and condemn themſelves, on that very account. They *fear* they have not repented in that manner they ought to have done, becauſe their *Repentance* was at firſt the Effect of their *Fear*; that is, they allow

SERM. III. low the Suggeſtions of this Paſſion to have a great deal of Weight in the latter Caſe, but none at all in the former. Which is, at one and the ſame time, to pay too *much*, and too *little* Regard to it, and to *condemn ourſelves* (as St. *Paul* elſewhere ſpeaks) *in that thing we allow*. And the Judgments Men paſs on their own Condition, from ſuch inconſiſtent and confuſed Views as theſe, muſt needs be very uncertain, and unfit to be relied on. Nay,

Rom. xiv. 22.

3. It is no ſlight Token of a Man's being really and ſincerely Good, and upon ſuch Principles and Grounds as are well-pleaſing to God, in that he *ſuſpects* himſelf not to be ſo: Since we rarely find any but the beſt and moſt religious Minds, entertaining ſuch little *Doubts*, and encouraging ſuch nice *Scruples* as theſe. The bold preſumptuous Sinner goes on *hardily* in his way; careleſs and fearleſs; without looking backward to the Point from whence he ſet out, or forward to the End of his Journey. *He repenteth not*

of

of his Wickedneſs (according to the Deſcription given of him by the Prophet *Jeremy) ſaying, What have I done? but turneth again to his Courſe, as the Horſe ruſheth into the Battle.* The *Hypocrite* on the other ſide, is as ſecure and well ſatisfied in *his* Way, having acted his Part ſo long, as to come at laſt to think it real, and to deceive even his own Heart, as well as the Eyes and Obſervations of others; and contenting himſelf with a demure Shew and Face of Religion, without any troubleſome Doubts or Miſgivings. But it is the good and conſcientious Man chiefly, that is uneaſy and diſſatisfied with himſelf; always ready to condemn his own Imperfections, and to ſuſpect his own Sincerity upon the ſlighteſt Occaſions. He deſires *ſo much* and earneſtly to pleaſe God, that he can never think he pleaſes him *as much* as he ought to do. Every wry Step, by which he imagines himſelf to have declined from the Path of Duty, *affrights* him when he reflects on it; every

SERM III.

Jer. xviii. 6.

SERM. III. every the leaſt Obliquity in Thought, Word, and Deed, ſeems conſiderable to him. So that theſe Suſpicions and Godly Jealouſies do, I ſay, uſually abound *moſt* there, where there is leaſt need of them; and it is (generally ſpeaking) a very good Sign of a Man's loving God heartily, and in good earneſt, when he begins to doubt, whether he loves him or no; and ſuſpects even the beſt *Fruits* of Holineſs, which ſhine in his Life and Practice, becauſe he cannot look back with Satisfaction on the *Principle* of Fear, from whence they flowed. And therefore theſe very Scruples and Jealouſies, which he thus cheriſhes, concerning the Goodneſs of his State, would really afford Matter of ſound Comfort to him, if he had but Skill and Courage enough to make a right Uſe of them.

In order to convince him of which Truth, after premiſing theſe *general* Reflections, I proceed now, as I propoſed, more *particularly* and *directly* to prove,

" That

" That a Fear of God's Wrath and " of eternal Puniſhment, is a proper " and ſufficient Motive to lead Men to " Holineſs."

This will appear, if we conſider,

1. The *Paſſion* itſelf, its *Riſe*, *Nature*, and *Uſe*.

2. The natural *Apprehenſions* we have of God, as a *Lawgiver*, *Judge*, and *Avenger*.

3. The *Depth* of Sin, into which ſome Men are plunged; and *out of* which nothing but Motives of Terror and Aſtoniſhment can poſſibly raiſe them.

1. The Paſſion of *Fear* is natural to us, and was given us by God for our Safety and Convenience; to warn us of impending Dangers, and to put us upon finding out proper Ways for avoiding them. When therefore this Paſſion imprints on our Minds a lively Senſe of the Puniſhment due to Sin, of the Diſpleaſure of God, of the mighty and inſupportable Torments of Hell; and doth from hence excite and quicken

us

SERM. III.

us into the Practice of Virtue; when it doth this, I ſay, it doth its Duty, and ſerves the very End for which it was implanted in our Natures. Every thing, that God made, is *good*; that is, there is ſome good Uſe or other, to which it may be put. And certainly our *Fears* muſt then be of the greateſt Uſe to us, when they are turned upon their moſt proper and important Object, *Everlaſting Burnings*. Do we think, they were deſigned to admoniſh us only of ſome *ſlighter* Harms, which may reach our Bodies, or our Fortunes? to keep us awake and alarmed in relation to the Evils of *this* Life alone, without extending to thoſe of *another*, as *certain* as theſe, and far *greater* than theſe in *Degree* and *Duration?* We may as well imagine, that *Reaſon* was given us, merely as an help towards managing the little Affairs of this *preſent* World to our Advantage, without any regard to what is *future*; to make us wiſe and prudent in our ſhort and momentary Deſigns upon Happineſs,

Happineſs, without aſſiſting us in the Diſcovery and Purſuit of eternal Felicity. Certainly, as Man is a Creature framed for *Religion*, ſo every one of his Faculties and Affections was originally ordained to the ſame End that *he* himſelf was; and *may* therefore to that purpoſe be *uſefully*, and is always moſt *fitly* employed. His *Fears* therefore, and his *Hopes*, and all the other Paſſions that belong to the reaſonable Nature, were given him, as much for *religious* Uſes, as his very *Soul* and his *Being* were. So that when the *Terrors of the Lord perſuade Men*, a natural *End* is ſerved by a natural *Paſſion*; and, upon theſe Terms, we may be ſure, the *Author* of our *Nature* will not refuſe our Obedience.

SERM. III.

2. This will *farther* appear, in the *next* Place, from the natural *Apprehenſions* we have of *God*, when we conſider him as the *Object* of our *Duty* and Service: It is plain, that we do then repreſent him to ourſelves, as a *Lawgiver*; that is, as one who preſcribes a *Rule* to our Actions, and will puniſh

SERM. III.

the *Breach* of it. We cannot conceive him as giving a *Law* without a *Sanction*, that is, without repreſenting him at the ſame time to ourſelves, as *enforcing* that Law with a *Threat*, and *ſecuring* the Obſervance of it by ſome *Penalty* annexed. This is the Method of all *Inferior* Legiſlators, and is from thence eaſily and naturally transferred by us to the *Supreme*. So that our *firſt* and moſt *immediate* Conceptions of God, by which we are excited to our Duty, involve in them this very *Motive* we are ſo apt to ſuſpect; and we cannot propoſe to ourſelves the One, without feeling in ſome meaſure the Power and Force of the Other.

To obſerve God's Laws under a Proſpect of *Reward*, is what many of thoſe, who reject a Principle of *Dread*, will not deny to be a reaſonable and ſufficient *Inducement* to Virtue. Now, how our *deſiring a Good* ſhould make what we do on that account acceptable in the Eyes of God, and yet that very thing be unacceptable, when done to *avoid* an *Evil*;

Evil; how the *Hope* of Reward ſhould be a *good* Motive, and yet the *Fear* of loſing that Reward be an *ill* one, is hard to determine. It is on each ſide, the *Selfiſhneſs* of the Principle, and the Mixture of our own *Intereſt* with it, that ſeems to leſſen its Worth. And I cannot ſee, how our *Intereſt* is leſs concerned in purſuing *Pleaſure*, than in flying *Pain*.

SERM. III.

Indeed, the nobleſt and moſt commendable Reaſon of our ſerving God is, our *Love* of him. God is *Love*, and he *chiefly* delights in thoſe diſintereſted Duties which ſpring from *that* Principle. However, he hath been pleaſed to condeſcend to the *Weakneſs*, nay to the *Baſeneſs* of our Natures, and to accept our bounden Duty and Service, upon much lower Terms. He hath thought fit to *allure*, and to *frighten* us into Obedience; and him that comes even *this* way *to him, he will in no wiſe caſt out.*

3. To ſtrengthen this Proof yet farther, let us, in the *third* place, take a

SERM. III.

View of the State and Condition of profligate Sinners. We ſhall find it to be *ſuch*, that nothing but *Terror* can any ways lay hold of them. Is it poſſible for a Man that is ſunk into all manner of Vice and Impurity, to be ſtruck on a ſudden with the Beauty of Virtue and Goodneſs, with the Love of God, and of his infinite Perfections? Can he (do we think) recover himſelf, by reflecting on the Deformity and Turpitude of Sin, on the Dignity of his Nature, and of that divine Character and Reſemblance which he bears? Alas! let Virtue be never ſo lovely, Goodneſs never ſo deſirable; yet *He* hath no *Eyes* to *ſee* it, no *Heart* to *deſire* it. He hath loſt the Taſte of every thing, but thoſe very Delights, in which he indulges himſelf; and Reaſon is no longer Reaſon to him, than it pleads for his Enjoyments. Now what, I ſay, can poſſibly rouſe ſuch a Creature as this, ſo loſt to all ingenuous Motives, but the Senſe of divine Vengeance, and the Dread of eternal Puniſhments? The *Terrors of Hell* may

may ſtill perhaps *perſuade* him to conſider (for *Fear* will find an Entrance where no other Paſſion can) but to all Arguments beſides he is perfectly impenetrable.

Indeed, *after* that the *Wrath* of God hath terrified him into Reflections on his wretched State, and into Reſolutions of quitting it, there is room for *other* Motives to come in, and *finiſh* the Work thus *begun*; to improve his Contrition, and raiſe his Reſentments, and build him up in the Practice of all manner of Holineſs. But ſtill the leading Step towards Repentance muſt, I ſay, proceed from his *Fear*; which therefore is a ſure Foundation for all Penitents to build on, unleſs we can ſuppoſe that God ever leaves Men in *Sin*, without affording them any one proper Motive to ſtir them up to *Virtue*; an Opinion not eaſily to be entertained of infinite Goodneſs.

Why then ſhould the pious *Chriſtian* harbour any Doubts of this kind in his Breaſt? *O, why ſhould his Soul be caſt* Pſ. xlii. 5.

SERM. III. *down, and his Spirit disquieted within him?* There is no Room for Despondency of Mind in such a State as His; no Reason, why that Dread of Divine Wrath, which frighted him at *first* into the Ways of Virtue, should continue to haunt and pursue him *still*, now he is far advanced in them. The *only Fears*, which will be prejudicial to him, and which he ought to dismiss, are those concerning the *Validity* of his Repentance. His *other Fears* were agreeable to Nature, and Reason, and to those Methods, which the Divine Wisdom hath thought fit to make use of for reclaiming Sinners. To serve God out of *Love*, and *Love* only, without the least Mixture or Allay of any baser Principle, is the Privilege of Angels and blessed Spirits who live in the Presence of God. It will *hereafter* be the Reward of our having lived as became the Gospel, but it cannot be matter of strict Duty to us *now*. Lower and less noble Ends must influence us, while we are in this State of Imperfection:

'Till

'Till *that which is perfect is come*, that *which is in part* need not, and cannot *be done away*. Therefore *why is his Soul caſt down, and why is his Spirit diſquieted within him?*

To all this perhaps the dejected *Chriſtian*, for whoſe ſake I have entered on this Argument, will reply, That the Fear of eternal Puniſhment is indeed a proper and ſufficient Motive to lead Men to Holineſs, if it be *ſuch* a Fear of God's Power and Juſtice, as is ſweetly allayed and tempered by a Senſe of his Goodneſs; that is, if it be an *Evangelic* and *Filial* Fear, compoſed of an equal Mixture of Awe and Delight, of Love and Reverence; for to ſuch a Fear as this the moſt eminent Saints of God were no Strangers, ſince they *ſerved the Lord with Fear* (as good *David* ſpeaks) *and rejoiced before him with Reverence.*

But alas! *His* is altogether a *Legal* and a *Servile* Fear; a ſullen, gloomy Paſſion, without the leaſt Mixture of any thing Joyous and Delightful; a

SERM. III.

mere Dread of Omnipotence, armed with Vengeance, which presents the Rod to him as lifted up, and makes him tremble at the Sight of it; and forces him on towards his Duty, *without*, and *against* Inclination, merely as Beasts of Sacrifice are dragged to the Horns of the Altar. This is *his* wretched Case; no Glimpse of Light appears in any Corner of his Soul; no comfortable Reflections on the Goodness and Mercy of God shine inwardly upon him; but the Face of his Mind is all covered with Darkness, Distrust, and Horror. And how can the Services that flow from such a Temper as *this*, be acceptable to that God, who is all Love and Light, and is pleased only with a willing Mind, and a *cheerful Giver?* This is the sad Account which some Men give of themselves without Cause. To rectify it, let them consider,

1st. Hath this Principle, which they thus blame, done the Work of a better? Hath it made them Charitable, Humble, Temperate, Devout? Hath it

SERM. III.

it enabled them *to purify themſelves from all Spot and Blemiſh*, and to *adorn the Doctrine of their God and Saviour in all Things?* If it hath, they may put what Odious Names upon it, and dreſs it up in what frightful Shapes they pleaſe; but it is certainly ſuch a Principle, as will bear the Teſt, and, if they continue to be directed by it, will at laſt carry them to Heaven. Be not deceived, *He that doth Righteouſneſs, is Righteous*; and as ſuch, ſhall receive a Recompence at the great Day of Account, though he became ſo upon the loweſt and leaſt valuable Conſiderations: The Meanneſs of the Motive, which induced him to Obey, ſhall not rob him of the Rewards which are due to Obedience. And therefore the Diſtinction between a *Legal* and *Servile* Fear is here miſtaken and miſapplied. For a *Servile* Fear (in the true Notion of it) is *ſuch* a Dread of divine Vengeance, as hath no ſaving Influence upon Mens Lives and Converſations; *ſuch* as Malefactors are ſeized with, when under the

Tit. ii. 10.

1 John iii. 7.

Sentence

SERM. III. Sentence of Execution, and without Hopes of escaping it; *such* as Ill Men feel, who go on obstinately in their Ill Courses, *notwithstanding it*; and *such*, under which the Devils themselves bow and tremble, though without altering in the least their diabolical Natures by the Means of it. But this is far from being the Case of that Man, who *works out his own Salvation with Fear and Trembling*: And therefore, we miscall *such* Fears as these, when we term them *Servile*: For that is always in the Accounts of right Reason, and will be esteemed in the Sight of God, a true *Filial Fear*, which works by a true *Filial Obedience*. But,

2dly It is *farther* probable, that these melancholy Persons do represent their own inward Sense of Things worse than it deserves; and persuade themselves into an Opinion, that they Love God less, and Dread him more than perhaps they really do. For (as I hinted at the Beginning of this Discourse) it is scarce conceivable that any Men, who

who are not ſincerely good, ſhould diſquiet themſelves with ſuch Scruples about the Ends and Motives which inclined them to Goodneſs. It is their Fear of not Loving God as *much* as they *ought* to do, which makes them apprehend that they do not love him *at all.* And therefore, inſtead of turning their Eyes *inwardly* upon the Ideas, which they have lodged in their frightful Imagination, let them direct them upon the *outward* Effects of their Fears; inſtead of puzzling themſelves about the true *Principle* of Holineſs, let them take a comfortable Proſpect of the genuine *Fruits* of it, which abound in their Life and Practice. And then their Doubts will all diſappear, their Scruples will vaniſh; and they will be ſatisfied, that the Love of God *hath* that Place which it *ought* to have in their Hearts, in as much as they *Obey* him: *For in this we know that we love God, if we keep his Commandments.* But, John. xiv. 15.

3dly and *laſtly*, Let the Men who are under theſe Apprehenſions, make a right

SERM. III. right Use of them; not disturb and terrify themselves with such Thoughts, but take Occasion from thence to gain Ground upon themselves, and to advance faster in the Ways of Religion; and to excite in their Hearts such a fervent and exalted Love of God, as shall leave no Room for any Doubts and Misgivings. It is true, that *perfect Love casteth out Fear*; but such a Degree of Divine Love is scarce attainable here: However, we may aspire and approach still nearer and nearer towards this Perfection. How much soever we have conquered our *Dread* of God, and improved our *Love* of him, we may go on still to dread him less, and to love him more, 'till we come at last to be *rooted and grounded in Love, and be able to comprehend, with all Saints, what is the Breadth, and Length, and Depth, and Height, and to know the Love of Christ, which passeth Knowledge.*

Ephes. iii. 17, 18, 19.

To Him, together with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, &c.

THE

THE
TERRORS
OF
CONSCIENCE.

The Terrors of Conscience.

A

SERMON

Preached at

St. *PAUL*'s

Before the

LORD MAYOR,

May 30. 1703.

MATTH. xiv. 1, 2, 3.

At that Time Herod *the* Tetrarch *heard of the Fame of* Jesus, *and said unto his Servants, This is* John *the* Baptist, *He is risen from the Dead; and therefore mighty Works do shew forth themselves in him. For* Herod *had laid hold on* John, *and bound him, and put him in Prison,* &c.

THE Wicked (says the Prophet) *are like the troubled Sea, when it cannot rest, whose Waters cast up Mire and Dirt.* Is. lvii. 20.

SERM. IV.

SERM. IV. *Dirt.* That is, Men of flagitious Lives are ſubject to great Uneaſineſs: Whatever Calm and Repoſe of Mind they may ſeem for a Seaſon to enjoy, yet anon, a quick and pungent Senſe of Guilt (awakened by ſome Accident) riſes like a Whirlwind, ruffles and diſquiets them throughout, and turns up to open View, from the very Bottom of their Conſciences, all the Filth and Impurity which had ſettled itſelf there. A Truth, of which there is not, perhaps, in the whole Book of God, a more apt and lively Inſtance, than that which the Paſſage I have read from the Evangeliſt ſets before us. The crying Guilt of *John* the Baptiſt's Blood ſat but ill, no doubt, on the Conſcience of *Herod*, from the Moment of his ſpilling it. However, his inward Anguiſh and Remorſe was ſtifled and kept under for a time, by the Splendor and Luxury in which he lived, 'till he *heard of the Fame of Jeſus*; and then his Heart ſmote him, at the Remembrance of the Inhuman Treatment he had given to

ſuch

ſuch another Juſt and Good Man; and wrung from him a Confeſſion of what he felt, by what he uttered on that Occaſion. *He ſaid unto his Servants, This is John the Baptiſt! He is riſen from the Dead! and therefore mighty Works do ſhew forth themſelves in him.* There could not be a wilder Imagination than this, or which more betrayed the Agony and Confuſion of Thought, under which he laboured. He had often heard *John* the Baptiſt preach, and muſt have known that the Driſt of all his Sermons was, to prepare the *Jews* for the Reception of a Prophet, *mightier than Him*, and *whoſe Shoes he was not worthy to bear.* Upon the Arrival of that Prophet, ſoon afterwards, *Herod's* frighted Conſcience gives him no Leiſure to recollect what his Meſſenger had ſaid; but immediately ſuggeſts to him, That this was the murdered *Baptiſt* himſelf! *Herod*, as appears from Hiſtory, was, though *Circumciſed*, little better than an *Heathen* in his Principles and Practices; or, if ſincerely a

SERM. IV.

SERM. IV. *Jew*, was, at moſt, but of the Sect of the *Sadducees*, who *ſaid, there was no Reſurrection*; and yet, under the preſent Pangs and Terrors of his Guilt, he imagines, that *John* was *riſen from the Dead*, on purpoſe to reprove him. It was the *Baptiſt*'s diſtinguiſhing Character, that he *did no Miracles*, nor pretended to the Power of doing them; and yet even from hence the diſturbed Mind of *Herod* concludes, that it muſt be *He*, becauſe *mighty Works did ſhew forth themſelves in him.* And ſo great was his Conſternation and Surprize, that it broke out before Thoſe, who ſhould leaſt have been Witneſſes of it: For he Whiſpers not his guilty Fears to a Boſom Friend, to the Partner of his Crime, and of his Bed; but forgets his high State and Character, and declares them *to his* very *Servants.* Surely nothing can be more juſt and appoſite than the Alluſion of the Prophet, in reſpect to this wicked Tetrarch; He is *like the troubled Sea, when it cannot reſt, whoſe Waters caſt up Mire and Dirt.*

Matt. xxii. 23.

Joh. x. 41.

Dirt. And ſuch is every one, that ſins with an high Hand, againſt the clear Light of his Conſcience: Although he may reſiſt the Checks of it at firſt, yet he will be ſure to feel the Laſhes and Reproaches of it afterwards. The Avenging Principle within us will certainly do *Its* Duty, upon any eminent Breach of *Ours*; and make every flagrant Act of Wickedneſs, even in this Life, a Puniſhment to itſelf.

SERM. IV.

With this general Propoſition the particular Inſtance of the Text (duly opened and conſidered) will furniſh us: and this Propoſition therefore I now purpoſe, by God's Bleſſing, to handle and enforce; and, in order to fix a due, lively, and laſting Senſe of it upon our Minds, I ſhall, in what follows, conſider *Conſcience*, not as a mere *Intellectual Light*, or *Informing Faculty*, a *Dictate* of the *Practical Underſtanding* (as the Phraſe of the Schools is) which Directs, Admoniſhes, and Influences us, in what we *are to do*; but as it acts *back* upon the Soul by a

SERM. IV.

Reflection on what we *have done*; and is, by that Means, the Source and Cauſe of all that Joy, or Dejection of Mind, of thoſe internal Senſations (if I may ſo ſpeak) of Pleaſure or Pain, which attend the Practice of great Virtues or great Vices; and begin that Heaven, and that Hell in us here, which will be our Sure and Eternal Portion hereafter.

Prov. xx. 27. *The Spirit* (or Conſcience) *of Man is the Candle of the Lord*, which not only *diſcovers* to us, by its Light, wherein our Duty conſiſts; but *revives* alſo, and *chears* us with its bright Beams, when we do *well*; and, when we do *ill*, is as a *burning Flame*, to ſcorch, and conſume us.

As ſuch, I ſhall conſider it in my preſent Diſcourſe: Wherein,

I. *Firſt*, I ſhall endeavour to Illuſtrate this plain but weighty Truth (for indeed it needs *Illuſtration* only, and not *Proof*) by ſome Conſiderations drawn from *Scripture*, *Reaſon*, and *Experience*.

Secondly,

SERM. IV.

Secondly, I ſhall account for a particular and preſſing *Difficulty*, that ſeems to attend the Proof of it. And, II.

Thirdly and *laſtly*, I ſhall apply it to (the proper Object of *all* our Admonitions from the Pulpit, but moſt eſpecially of *this)* the *Hearts* and *Conſciences* of the Hearers. III.

Firſt, I am to illuſtrate this Truth by ſome Conſiderations drawn from Scripture, Reaſon, and Experience. I.

That *Guilt* and *Anguiſh* are inſeparable, and that the Puniſhment of a Man's Sin begins always from Himſelf, and from his own Reflections, is a Truth every where ſuppoſed, appealed to, and inculcated in *Scripture*. The Conſequence of the *firſt* Sin that was ever committed in the World, is *there* ſaid to have been, that our offending Parents *perceived* their own Nakedneſs, and *fled* from the Preſence of God: that is, a conſcious *Shame* and

SERM. IV.

Fear succeeded in the Room of lost Innocence; and the *Presages* of their own Minds, those *Auguria Pœnæ futuræ* (of which even the Heathen Moralists speak) anticipated the Sentence of Divine Vengeance. In relation to this Office of Conscience it is, that the inspired Writers speak of it (in Terms borrowed from the awful Solemnities of Human Judicatories) as *bearing Witness* against us, as *Accusing, or Excusing, Judging, and Condemning* us. And the Prophet therefore adds this Woe to the other Menaces, which he had denounced on a disobedient and profligate People, that *their own Wickedness should correct them, and their Backsliding should reprove them:* A Correction so severe and terrible, that *Solomon* balancing the Outward Afflictions of Life, and Bodily Pains, with the Inward Regrets and Torments of a guilty Mind, pronounces the former of these to be Light and Tolerable in comparison of the latter: *The Spirit of a Man* (says he) *will sustain his Infirmities;*

Rom. ii. 15.

Jer. ii. 19.

Prov. xviii. 14.

firmities; but a wounded Spirit who can bear? Isaiah describes the dismal Reflections, and foreboding Thoughts that harbour in such a Breast, after this Manner: *The Sinners of Sion are afraid, Fearfulness hath surprized the Hypocrites: Who shall dwell with devouring Flames? Who shall dwell with everlasting Burnings?* But no Part of Scripture gives us so lively an Account of this inward Scene of Dejection and Horror, as the *Psalms* of Penitent *David:* In one of them, particularly, he thus complains: *Mine Iniquities are gone over my Head, as an heavy Burthen; they are too heavy for me. I am feeble and sore broken, I have roared, by reason of the Disquietness of my Heart. I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the Day long. My Heart panteth, my Strength faileth me; and as for the Light of mine Eyes, it is also gone from me. For thine Arrows stick fast in me, and thy Hand presseth me sore: There is no Soundness in my Flesh, because*

SERM. IV.

Is. xxxiii. 14.

Ps. xxxviii.

SERM. IV. *cauſe of thine Anger; neither is there any Reſt in my Bones, becauſe of my Sin.*

This is the Expreſſive Language of Holy Writ, when it would ſet out to us the Diſorders and Uneaſineſs of a guilty ſelf-condemning Mind. And,

2. There is nothing in theſe Repreſentations *particular* to the *Times* and *Perſons*, on which they point; nothing but what happens alike to *all* Men in *like* Caſes; and is the genuine and neceſſary Reſult of offending againſt the Light of our Conſciences. Nor is it poſſible indeed in the Nature of the Thing, that Matters ſhould be otherwiſe. It is the Way, in which Guilt doth and muſt always operate. For *Moral* Evil can no more be committed, than *Natural* Evil can be ſuffered, without Anguiſh and Diſquiet: Whatever doth Violence to the plain Dictates of our Reaſon concerning Virtue and Vice, Duty and Sin, will as certainly diſcompoſe and afflict our Thoughts, as a Wound will raiſe a

Smart

Smart in the Fleſh that receives it. *Good* and *Evil*, whether *Natural* or *Moral*, are but other Words for *Pleaſure* and *Pain*, Delight and Uneaſineſs: At leaſt, tho' they may be diſtinguiſhed in the *Notion*, yet are they not to be ſeparated in *Reality*; but the one of them, wherever it is, will conſtantly and uniformly excite and produce the other. *Pain* and *Pleaſure* are the Springs of all human Actions, the great Engines, by which the wiſe Author of our Natures governs and ſteers them to the Purpoſes, for which he ordained them. By *theſe*, annexed to the Perception of Good and Evil, he inclines us powerfully to purſue the one, and to avoid the other; to purſue *natural Good*, and to avoid *natural Evil*, by delightful or uneaſy Senſations, that immediately affect the *Body*; to purſue *moral Good*, and to avoid *moral Evil*, by pleaſing or painful Impreſſions made on the *Mind*. From hence it is, that we ſo readily chooſe or refuſe, do or forbear every thing

SERM. IV.

SERM. IV. thing that is profitable or noxious to us, and requiſite to preſerve or perfect our Beings. And becauſe it is an *End* of far greater Importance, and more worthy of our All-wiſe Creator's Care, to ſecure the Integrity of our *moral*, than of our *natural* Perfections; therefore he hath made the Pleaſures and Pains, ſubſervient to this purpoſe, more extenſive and durable; ſo that the inward Complacence we find in acting reaſonably and virtuouſly, and the Diſquiet we feel from vicious Choices and Purſuits, is protracted beyond the Acts themſelves, from whence it aroſe; and renewed often upon our Souls, by diſtant *Reflections*; whereas the Pleaſures and Pains, attending the Perceptions of natural Good and Evil, are bounded within a narrower Compaſs, and do ſeldom ſtay long, or return with any Force upon the Mind, after a Removal of the Objects that occaſioned them.

Hence then the Satisfactions, or Stings of Conſcience ſeverally ariſe: They are the

the Sanctions, as it were, and Enforcements of that eternal Law of Good and Evil, to which we are ſubjected; the natural Rewards and Puniſhments originally annexed to the Obſervance, or Breach of that Law by the great Promulger of it; and which being thus *joined* and twiſted *together* by *God*, can ſcarce by any Arts, Endeavours, or Practices of *Men* be *put aſunder*. The Prophet therefore explains *Good* and *Evil*, by *Sweet* and *Bitter*. *Woe be to them* (ſays he) *that call Evil Good, and Good Evil! that put Bitter for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter!* Implying, that the former of theſe do as naturally and ſenſibly affect the Soul, as the latter do the Palate; and leave as grateful, or diſpleaſing a Reliſh behind them. But,

SERM. IV.

Iſa. v. 20.

3. There is no need of *Arguments*, to evince this Truth; the univerſal *Experience* and *Feeling* of Mankind bears Witneſs to it. For ſay, did ever any of you break the Power of a darling Luſt, reſiſt a preſſing Temptation,

or

SERM. IV.

or perform any Act of a conſpicuous and diſtinguiſhing Virtue, but that you found it ſoon turn to account to you? Did not your Minds ſwell with a ſecret Satisfaction, at the Moment when you were doing it? And was not a Reflection upon it afterwards always ſweet and refreſhing? *Health to your Navel, and Marrow to your Bones?* On the contrary, did you ever indulge a Criminal Appetite, or allow yourſelf ſedately in any Practice which you knew to be unlawful, but that you felt an inward Struggle, and ſtrong Reluctances of Mind before the Attempt, and bitter Pangs of Remorſe attending it? Though no Eye ſaw what you did, and you were ſure that no Mortal could diſcover it; did not Shame and Confuſion ſecretly lay hold of you? Was not your own *Conſcience* inſtead of a thouſand Witneſſes to you? Did it not *plead with you Face to Face*, as it were, and upbraid you with your Backſlidings? Have not ſome of you, perhaps, at this Inſtant, a ſenſible Experience

Prov. iii. 8.

Ezek. xx. 35.

perience of the Truth which I am preſſing upon you? Do you not feel the Operation of that powerful Principle, of which I am diſcourſing? Is not the Memory of ſome of your paſt Sins even now preſent to you? And are not your Minds ſtung with ſome Degree of that Regret and Uneaſineſs, which followed upon the firſt Commiſſion of them? And do you not diſcover what paſſes within you, by a more than ordinary Attention, Serioufneſs, and Silence; and even by an Endeavour to throw off theſe viſible Marks of Concern, into which you are ſurpriſed, as ſoon as they are obſerved?

The jolly and voluptuous Livers, the Men who ſet up for Freedom of Thought, and for diſengaging themſelves from the Prejudices of Education and ſuperſtitious Opinions, may pretend to diſpute this Truth, and perhaps, in the Gaiety of their Hearts, may venture even to deride it: But they cannot, however, get rid of their inward Convictions of it; they muſt feel it ſometimes

SERM. IV.

times, though they will not own it. There is no Possibility of reasoning ourselves out of our own Experience, or of laughing down a Principle woven so closely into the Make and Frame of our Natures. Notwithstanding our Endeavours to conceal and stifle it, it will break out sometimes, and discover itself to a careful Observer, through all our Pretences and Disguises; for even *in the midst of* such *a Laughter, the Heart is sorrowful:* and as the Beginning of that *Mirth* was Folly, so the End of it is always *Heaviness.*

Prov. xiii. 14.

Look upon one of these Men, who would be thought to have made his ill Practices and ill Principles perfectly consistent; to have shaken off all Regard to the Dictates of his own Mind concerning Good and Evil, and to have gotten above the Reproofs of his Conscience; and you will find a thousand Things, in his Actions and Discourses, testifying against him, that *he deceiveth himself*, and that *the Truth is not in him.*

John i. 8.

him. If he be indeed, as he pretends, at eaſe in his Enjoyments, from whence come thoſe Diſorders and Unevenes in his Life and Conduct; thoſe Viciſſitudes of good and bad Humour, Mirth and Thoughtfulneſs; that perpetual Purſuit of little, mean, inſipid Amuſements; that reſtleſs Deſire of changing the Scene, and the Objects of his Pleaſures; thoſe ſudden Eruptions of Paſſion and Rage upon the leaſt Diſappointments? Certainly, all is not right within; or elſe there would be a greater Calm, and Serenity without: If his Mind were not in an unnatural Situation, and under contrary Influences, it would not be thus toſſed and diſquieted. For what Reaſon doth he contrive for himſelf ſuch a Chain and Succeſſion of Entertainments; and take care to be delivered over from one Folly, one Diverſion, to another, without Intermiſſion? Why, but becauſe he dreads to leave any void Spaces of Life unfilled, leſt *Conſcience* ſhould find Work for his Mind at thoſe Intervals?

He

SERM. IV. He hath no way to fence againſt guilty Reflections, but by ſtopping up all the Avenues at which they might enter. Hence, his ſtrong Addiction to Company, his Averſion to Darkneſs and Solitude; which recollect the Thoughts, and turn the Mind inward upon itſelf, by ſhutting out external Objects and Impreſſions. It is not, becauſe the Pleaſures of Society are always new and grateful to him, that he purſues them thus keenly; for they ſoon loſe their Reliſh, and grow flat and inſipid, by Repetition. They are not his Choice, but his Refuge; for the Truth is, he dares not long converſe with himſelf, and with his own Thoughts; and the worſt Company in the World is better to him, than that of a *reproving Conſcience.*

A lively and late Proof of this we had in a certain Writer, who ſet up for delivering Men from theſe vain fantaſtick Terrors; and was, on that Account, for a Seaſon much read and applauded. But it is plain, that he could

could not work that Effect in *himſelf*, which he pretended to work in *others:* For his Books manifeſtly ſhew, that his Mind was over-run with gloomy and terrible Ideas of Dominion and Power; and that he wrote in a perpetual Fright againſt thoſe very Principles, which he pretended to contradict and deride: And ſuch as knew his Converſation well, have aſſured us, that nothing was ſo dreadful to him, as to be in the Dark, and to give his natural Fears an Opportunity of recoiling upon him. That he was timorous to an Exceſs, is certain; he himſelf owns it, in the Account which he wrote of himſelf, and which is in every one's Hands: But he did not care to own the true Reaſon of it, and therefore lays it upon a mighty Fright, which ſeized his Mother, when the *Spaniards* attempted their famous Invaſion, in the Year 1588. the Year in which he was born. The more probable Account of it is, that it naturally ſprung from his own Conduct and

SERM. IV.

SERM. IV. Method of Thinking. He had been endeavouring all his Life-time, to get rid of thoſe Religious Principles, under which he was carefully educated by his Father (a Divine of the Church of *England)* and to ſet up for a new Syſtem and Sect, which was to be built upon the Ruins of all thoſe Truths, that were then, and had ever been held ſacred by the beſt and wiſeſt of Men. It was Vanity puſhed him on to this Attempt, but he could not compaſs it. He was able, here and there, to delude a ſuperficial Thinker with his new Terms and Reaſonings: But the hardeſt Taſk of all was, thoroughly to deceive himſelf. His *Underſtanding* could not be compleatly impoſed upon, even by its own Artifices; and his *Conſcience*, every now and then, got the better of him in the Struggle; ſo he lived in a perpetual Suſpicion and Dread of the Reality of thoſe Truths, which he repreſented as Figments; and, while he made Sport with that *Kingdom of Darkneſs* (as he loved to call another World)

World) trembled, in good earnest, at the Thought of it. SERM. IV.

Tiberius, that compleat Pattern of Wickedness and Tyranny, had taken as much Pains to conquer these Fears as any Man, and had as many Helps and Advantages towards it, from great Splendour and Power, and a perpetual Succession of new Business, and new Pleasures; and yet, as great a Master of the Art of Dissimulation as he was, he could not dissemble the inward Sense of his Guilt, nor prevent the open Eruptions of it upon very improper Occasions. Witness that *Letter*, which he wrote to the Senate from his impure Retreatment at *Capreæ*. *Tacitus* has preserved the first Lines of it; and there cannot be a livelier Image of a Mind filled with wild Distraction and Despair, than what they afford us: *Quid scribam Vobis, P. C. aut quomodo scribam, aut quid omnino non scribam hoc tempore, Dii me Deæque pejus perdant, quàm perire quotidiè sentio, si scio!* That is, "What, or how, at this

SERM. IV.

" Time, I ſhall write to you, Fathers " of the Senate, or what indeed I ſhall " not write to you, may all the Pow- " ers of Heaven confound me yet worſe " than they have already done, if I " know, or can imagine!" And *his* Obſervation upon it is well worthy of *ours*, and very appoſite to our preſent purpoſe: " In this manner (ſays he) " was this Emperor puniſhed by a Re- " flection on his own infamous Life " and Guilt; nor was it in vain that " the greateſt Maſter of Wiſdom [he " means *Plato*] affirmed, that were " the Breaſt of Tyrants once laid open " to our View, we ſhould ſee there " nothing but ghaſtly Wounds and " Bruiſes; the Conſciouſneſs of their " own Cruelty, Lewdneſs, and ill Con- " duct, leaving as deep and bloody " Prints on their Minds, as the Strokes " of the Scourge do on the Back of " a Slave. *Tiberius* (adds he) con- " feſſed as much, when he uttered theſe " Words; nor could his high Stati- " on, or even Privacy and Retirement " itſelf

" itſelf hinder him from diſcovering " to all the World the inward Ago- " nies and Torments, under which he " laboured." Thus that excellent Hiſtorian *.

Believe it, the Tales of Ghoſts and Spectres were not (as is commonly ſaid) the mere Inventions of deſigning Men to keep weak Minds in awe; nor the Products only of a religious Fear, degenerated into Melancholy and Superſtition; but wicked Men, haunted with a Senſe of their own Guilt (as the cruel Tetrarch here in the Text, with the Baptiſt's Murder) were uſed to affright themſelves with ſuch Phantoms as theſe, and often miſtook ſtrong and terrible Imaginations for real Apparitions. Thus, I am ſure, the Author of the Book of *Wiſdom* very naturally accounts for them in his 17th Chapter; out of which I ſhall recite a large Paſſage, very appoſite to the Point which

* About this Paſſage of *Tiberius*, ſee *Hooker*'s excellent Reflections, p. 367, 368.

SERM. IV. we are now handling. He is there with great Elegance, deſcribing that panick Fear, which ſeized the impious *Ægyptians*, when (as he ſpeaks) *they were fettered with the Bonds of a long Night, and ſhut up in their Houſes, the Priſoners of Darkneſs. Then*, ſays he, *they who had ſuppoſed that they lay hid in their ſecret Sins, were horribly aſtoniſhed and troubled with ſtrange Sights. For neither might the Corner that held them, keep them from Fear; but Noiſes, as of Waters falling down, ſounded about them, and ſad Viſions appeared unto them with heavy Countenances. And they that promiſed to drive away Terrors and Troubles from a ſick Soul* (the Men, we may ſuppoſe, who ſet up for confounding the Notions of Good and Evil, and ridiculing *Conſcience*) *were ſick themſelves of Fear worthy to be laughed at. For though no terrible Thing did affright them, yet being ſcared by Beaſts that paſſed by, and Hiſſing of Serpents, they died for Fear; refuſing to look upon the Air, which on*

no Side could be avoided. For Wickedneſs (as he concludes) *condemned by its own Witneſs, is very timorous; and, being preſſed with Conſcience, always forecaſteth grievous Things!* SERM. IV.

I know it will be ſaid, that though this be *often*, yet it is not *always* the Caſe; ſince we have now and then Inſtances of Men, who lead very flagitious Lives, and yet feel not any of theſe Qualms or Guirds of *Conſcience*; but do, in all appearance, *live* eaſily, and ſometimes even *die* calmly. Which could not be (ſay the Objectors) if the Principle of *Conſcience*, and the condemning Power of it were *natural* to Man; for it would then act like other natural Principles, univerſally, and without Exception. Having hitherto therefore illuſtrated this Truth by Obſervations drawn from *Scripture*, *Reaſon*, and *Experience*; I now proceed on my

Second general Head, To account for *this* Difficulty, which attends the Proof of it. In order to it, II.

SERM. IV.

1. I obſerve, that we are deceived often in the Judgments we paſs on ſuch Occaſions. In our common Intercourſe with the World, we ſee only the *Outſide* and Surface, as it were, of Mens Actions, but cannot tell how it is with them *Inwardly*, and at the Bottom. We frame our Opinions of them from what paſſes in Converſation and publick Places, where they may be upon their Guard, acting a Part, and ſtudying Appearances. The Hypocrite in Perfection will put on the Maſk ſo artificially, that it ſhall ſeem to be real and natural. Decency, and a Deſire of Eſteem ſhall enable Men to cover great Paſſions and Frailties, which nevertheleſs ſit very cloſe to them, and, as ſoon as thoſe Reſtraints are taken off, break out with Freedom. We have read of thoſe, who have been endued with ſuch a Conſtancy and Firmneſs of Temper, as even to endure the Rack, and to appear compoſed under the Pains of it, without owning their Crime, or declaring their Accomplices.

plices. And in like manner, the Torments of a guilty *Conſcience* may ſometimes be borne and diſſembled. I obſerve, SERM. IV.

2. That the Diſorders and Reprehenſions of *Conſcience* are not a *continued*, but an *intermitting* Diſeaſe; returning upon the Mind by Fits, and at particular Seaſons only; in the Intervals of which the Patient ſhall have ſeeming Health, and real Eaſe. The Eruptions of burning Mountains are not *perpetual*, nor doth even the Smoak itſelf aſcend *always* from the Tops of them; but though the Seeds of Fire lodged in their Caverns may be ſtifled and ſuppreſſed for a Time, yet anon they gather Strength, and break out again, with a Rage great in Proportion to its Diſcontinuance. 'Tis by Accidents and Occaſions chiefly that the Power of this Principle is called forth into Act; by a ſudden ill Turn of Fortune, or a Fit of Sickneſs, or our Obſervation of ſome remarkable Inſtance of divine Vengeance, which hath

over-

SERM. IV. overtaken other Men in like Caſes. Even *Herod* was not always under the Paroxyſm deſcribed in the Text, but ſurprized into it unawares, by his *hearing of the Fame of Jeſus*; and then his Heart ſmote him at the Remembrance of the inhuman Treatment he had given to ſuch another juſt and good Perſon, and filled his Mind anew with forgotten Horrors. We cannot therefore, from a preſent Calm of Thought, know, either how it *hath* been with a Man heretofore, or how it *ſhall* be with him hereafter; but *may* eaſily in ſuch Caſes, and *do* often judge *wrong* Judgment; ſaying, *Peace, Peace, where there is no Peace*, but a *Truce* only; and where it will appear, that there *was* none, whenever Affliction ruffles a Man's Soul, or a Death-bed rouzes him:

Veræ tum Voces Pectore ab imo
Erumpunt, atque eripitur Perſona, manet Res:

Then (and ſometimes *not 'till then)* all Maſks and Diſguiſes are thrown off, and the Mind appears naked and unguarded to itſelf and others.

Aſk

Aſk thoſe who attend the Sick, and help to prepare them for their Paſſage into another World; aſk them, I ſay, and they will tell you, how many Inſtances they have met with of Men, who ſeem to have been given up to a Spirit of Inſenſibility and Slumber, and have accordingly *ſlept* on for a long time, and *taken their Reſt*; and yet have in their laſt Moments been all at once ſufficiently awakened: What inexpreſſible Agonies and Horrors they have found upon the Minds of dying deſpairing Sinners, who thought themſelves ſecure againſt ſuch Attacks, and believed that the clamorous Principle within them was wholly ſilenced; but upon the *near* Proſpect of another World, and which made no Impreſſion on them at a *Diſtance*, have changed their Sentiments, and dropped their falſe Confidence; have ſeen their Guilt, and dreaded their Danger, when it was too late perhaps to think of deploring the one, or eſcaping the other.

After all, it muſt be owned,

3. That

SERM. IV.

3. That there are now and then *Inſtances* of Men, who have gone through even this *laſt* Tryal unſhaken; and, after leading very diſſolute *Lives*, have yet *died hard*, as the Phraſe is, without any ſeeming Concern for what was paſſed, or Dread of what was to follow. Whenever ſuch an *Effect* happens, it is owing to one or more of theſe *Cauſes*; either to ill *Principles* early and deeply imbibed, or to a certain Obſtinacy and Sullenneſs of *Temper* peculiar to ſome Men; or laſtly, either to a natural or acquired *Stupidity*. If a Man begins *betimes* with himſelf, and takes *Pains* to vitiate his Mind with lewd Principles, and lives *long* in the Profeſſion of them, he may at laſt root and rivet them ſo faſt, 'till ſcarce any Application whatſoever is able to looſen them; and 'till the natural Sentiments of his *Conſcience* are even choaked and ſtifled by the Means of them.

A falſe Firmneſs and Reſolution, joined with a Shame of unſaying and undoing

doing all a Man hath ſaid and done be- SERM.
fore, may poſſibly carry him headlong IV.
on to his Death, without *owning*, or
perhaps even *ſeeing* his Danger. Groſs
and heavy Minds, unimproved by E-
ducation and Inſtruction, have at length
arrived at ſuch a Degree of *Stupidity*,
as to think of nothing *beyond* this
World, nor of any Thing *in* it, but
what immediately affects their *Senſes*.
And even Spirits more refined may,
by a perpetual and total Immerſion in
bodily Pleaſures, arrive at laſt at the
ſame Degree of *Inſenſibility*. In ſuch
Caſes and by the Help of ſuch Qua-
lities as theſe, it is *poſſible*, I grant,
and *ſometimes* happens, that Men have
gone *out* of the World, as they lived
in it, defying *Conſcience*, and the Power
of it, and deriding the Flames of *Hell*,
'till they were in the Midſt of them.
But theſe are *rare* Inſtances, and of no
Force therefore, when oppoſed to the
general Conviction and Feeling of Man-
kind upon the ſame Occaſions. They
prove only that there are Monſters in
the

SERM. IV. the *Moral*, as well as the *Natural* World, which make nothing againſt the ſettled Laws, and regular Courſe of either. To argue againſt the innate and pungent Reflections of *Conſcience* from ſome Mens want of them, is, as if one ſhould attempt to prove, that *Man* is not a *reaſonable* Creature, becauſe ſome Men are born *Naturals*, and *others* by too great an Intention of Thought, or by brutal Exceſſes, have loſt the *Uſe* of their *Reaſon*. For if the Light of *Reaſon* may itſelf be extinguiſhed, much more may the Voice of *Conſcience* be drowned; which being a practical Principle, is perpetually warred upon by our Luſts, and Paſſions, and ſinful Habits; whereas the other being a more ſpeculative Power, hath no Contrary in the Mind of Man to ſtruggle with.

But I forbear, ſince there remains yet the

III. *Third* and laſt Part of my Taſk, To apply what hath been ſaid to the proper

proper Object of *All* our Admonitions from the Pulpit (and particularly of *This)* the *Hearts* and *Conſciences* of the Hearers. SERM. IV.

Since therefore the wiſe Author of our Natures hath ſo contrived them, that Guilt is naturally, and almoſt neceſſarily attended with Trouble and Uneaſineſs, let us even from hence be perſuaded to preſerve the Purity, that we may preſerve the Peace and Tranquillity of our Minds. For *Pleaſure*'s Sake, let us abſtain from all *criminal* Pleaſures and Pollutions; becauſe the racking Pains of Guilt, duly awakened, are really an Overbalance to the greateſt ſenſual Gratifications. The Charms of Vice (how tempting ſoever they may ſeem to be) are by no Means equivalent to the inward Remorſe and Trouble, and the tormenting Reflections which attend it; which always keep Pace with our Guilt, and are proportioned to the Greatneſs and Daringneſs of our Crimes: For *mighty Sinners* (here as well as hereafter) *ſhall be mightily* Wiſd. vi. 6.

SERM. IV.

mightily tormented. Sins of Omiſſion, Infirmity, and Surprize there will be; even the juſt Man falls *ſeven Times a Day* by them, and riſes again from them with Strength and Chearfulneſs to his Duty; but let us be ſure carefully to guard againſt all ſuch *flagrant* Enormities, as do *Violence* to the firſt and plaineſt Dictates of our *Reaſon*, and *overbear* the ſtrongeſt Impulſes of our *Conſcience*; for theſe will certainly leave a Wound behind them, which we ſhall find it hard to bear, and harder, much harder to cure. Let no Temptation, no Intereſt, no Influence whatſoever ſway us to do any Thing contrary to the Suggeſtions of *Conſcience* in plain Caſes, and Points of Moment; let us no more dare to do in private what that tells us ought not to be done, than if we were upon an open Theatre, and the Eyes of the whole Creation were upon us. What ſignifies it that we eſcape the View and Obſervation of Men, when the watchful Witneſs within ſees and records all our Faults, and will

will certainly one Day reprove us, and ſet our Miſdeeds in Order before us.

It hath been reckoned a good Rule for an happy Conduct of Life, to be ſure of keeping our *domeſtick* Concerns right, and of being eaſy under our *own Roof*, where we may find an agreeable Retreat and Shelter from any Diſappointments we meet with in the great Scene of Vexation, the World. And the ſame Rule will, with greater Reaſon hold, in relation to the Peace of our *Conſciences*. Let out *firſt* Care be to keep all quiet and ſerene *there:* When this Point is once gained at Home, external Accidents will not be able deeply to affect us; and unleſs it be gained, all the Pleaſures, the Abundance and Pomp of Life will be inſipid and taſteleſs to us.

Wherefore let us reſolve all of us to ſtick to that Principle, which will keep us eaſy when we are alone, and will ſtick to us in an Hour when all outward Comforts fail us. Let thoſe of us particularly cheriſh it, who are in

SERM. IV.

any Degree placed above the reſt of our Neighbours by a Superiority of Parts, Power, Riches, or any other outward Diſtinctions. Let thoſe chiefly liſten to *this* Reprover, who are otherwiſe ſet in great meaſure *above* Reproof: The more deſtitute they are of Advice and Correption from *others*, the more careful ſhould they be to attend to the Suggeſtions and Whiſpers of *this* inward Monitor and Friend. Though they value not the Cenſures paſſed by the *Vulgar* on their Actions, yet ſurely they cannot ſlight their *own:* Nor do they ſtoop *beneath* themſelves, when they ſtoop *to* themſelves only, and to the inward Dictates and Perſuaſions of their own Minds. The Marks of Diſtinction they bear, though they may enable them ſometimes to ſin with Impunity as to *Men*, yet will they not ſecure them againſt the Laſhes of an avenging *Conſcience*; which will find them out in their moſt ſecret Retirements, cannot be forbid Acceſs, nor diſmiſſed without being heard; will make

make their Way to them, as they did to *Herod* and *Tiberius*, through Business or Pleasure, nay even through Guards and Crowds, and all the vain Forms and Ceremonies, with which they may be surrounded. SERM. IV.

In a Word; Let us *keep Innocency, and do the Thing which is right*; for whatever other Expedients towards Happiness Men may take up with, yet *that*, and that only, *will bring us Peace at the last*. Ps. xxxvii. 37.

Several Useful

OBSERVATIONS

ON

St. PAUL's DEFENSE of HIMSELF

BEFORE

FELIX.

St. Paul's *Defense before* Felix:

A

SERMON

Preached at

St. JAMES'S Chapel,

February 27, 1712-3.

ACTS xxiv. Part of Ver. 25.

And as He reasoned of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come, FELIX *trembled.*

SERM. V.

WHO, that hears these Words, would not wish to have been present at this astonishing Scene; which represents the Apostle of the Gentiles, giving an Account of his Faith to *Felix*, the *Roman* Governor, in so mov-

SERM. V. ing and convincing a manner, with ſuch a Force of Eloquence and Strength of Argument, that even he, before whom he ſtands capitally accuſed, is ſtruck, awed, confounded by his Diſcourſe, and the *Judge* himſelf quakes at the Voice of the *Priſoner! As he reaſoned of Righteouſneſs, Temperance, and Judgment to come* (ſays the Text) *Felix trembled.*

The Words will furniſh us with very Inſtructive and Uſeful Reflections, if we take Occaſion from them diſtinctly to conſider,

I. *Firſt*, The *Subject* Matter of Saint *Paul*'s Diſcourſe; *Righteouſneſs, Temperance, and Judgment to come.*

II. *Secondly*, His *Manner* of handling it; *he reaſoned.*

III. *Thirdly*, The remarkable *Effect*, that followed, upon his thus handling this important Subject; *Felix trembled.*

Firſt,

First, The *Subject* Matter of Saint *Paul*'s Discourse is said to have been, *Righteousness*, *Temperance*, *and Judgment to come.* SERM. V.

Not that we are to imagine, that the Apostle confined himself solely to the *three* Particulars here mentioned, without touching on any other Point of Christian Doctrine: Doubtless he declared to *Felix* the *whole Counsel* of God in the Redemption of Man by *Christ Jesus*; and insisted particularly on the great Article of *Christ's Resurrection*, in this Sermon, as he did in many others: For the Words, immediately preceding those of the Text, are, that *Felix sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the Faith in Christ*; and therefore *all* the Articles of the *Christian Faith* were, we may be sure, sufficiently explained by him. However, though many other Doctrines were at that Time handled by the Apostle, yet these of *Righteousness*, *Temperance*, and *Judgment to come*, had so

SERM. V.

ſo large a Share in his Diſcourſe, were ſo warmly, ſo effectually urged by him, that St. *Luke* hath not thought fit to take Notice of any other Part of his Sermon. From whence we are naturally led to raiſe this plain, but profitable Obſervation, that the moral Duties we are to practiſe in *this* Life, and the Rewards or Puniſhments we are to expect in *another*, are the chief Conſiderations in Religion, which ſhould moſt often and earneſtly be inculcated by thoſe who *preach* the Goſpel, and be moſt attentively liſtened to, and weighed by thoſe who *hear* it.

Some Perſons have a Prejudice againſt what is, by way of Reproach, called *Moral Preaching*, and *Moral Arguing*; when the Nature of Good and Evil, Virtue and Vice are inſiſted on, and the ſeveral Conſequences diſplayed, which, by the Light of Reaſon, are known to attend them: This, they think, is not to preach *Jeſus Chriſt*, and his Goſpel; it is not, to ſpeak ſpiritually, feelingly, powerfully, to the Hearts

Hearts and Consciences of Men. But St. *Paul*, it seems, was not of this Mind, when he made *Justice*, and *Temperance*, and a *future Account*, the chief Subject of his Sermon before *Felix*; when he argued (as his Manner of Preaching upon other Occasions shews that he did) from Principles of Natural Light, how great Reason Men had to practise the two *first* of these, and to believe and expect the *latter*; when he enlarged upon the intrinsick Beauty and Loveliness of those Virtues, and their manifest Subserviency to Mens present and future Happiness; and urged the universal Consent of Mankind to this Purpose, who had always acknowledged themselves to be under these Obligations, and, accordingly as they *did*, or did *not* fulfil them here, liable to be *rewarded*, or *punished* hereafter. St. *Paul*, we may be sure, thought himself all this while to be preaching *Jesus Christ* and his Gospel: And from the *Effect* we learn, that this *Moral* preaching of the Apostle

was

SERM. V. was ſufficiently powerful, awakening, edifying; for it had ſuch a Spiritual *Efficacy* in it, as to make his Auditor *tremble*.

But the *Subject* Matter of St. *Paul*'s Diſcourſe is not more obſervable, on the Account of its *Excellence and Importance at large*, than it is, for the particular *Fitneſs and Propriety* of it, with Regard to the *Perſon* to whom it was addreſſed. The two Vices of which *Felix* was moſt remarkably guilty, were *Injuſtice* and *Intemperance*; as Hiſtorians of unſuſpected Credit, both Heathen and *Jewiſh*, inform us. *Tacitus* ſays of him, that, *Judææ impoſitus, & cuncta malefacta ſibi impune* [*ceſſura*] *ratus, tantâ potentiâ ſubnixo, per omnem ſævitiam ac libidinem jus regium ſervili ingenio exercuit: i. e.* The Impunity which he promiſed himſelf from his high Station and Power, tempted him to commit all manner of Luſt and Violence. And *Joſephus* adds, that *Druſilla* herſelf, who now ſat with him on the Judgment Seat, was really the

the Wife of a certain King of the *Emesenes*, but had been enticed from his Bed by *Felix*, with whom she now publickly lived and conversed. Nothing therefore could be more *apposite*, than a Discourse concerning *Righteousness* and *Temperance*, before *such* a cruel and voluptuous Person; nothing more *proper*, than to put this unjust Judge in mind of *another*, a more impartial and dreadful *Tribunal*, before which *he* himself should one Day stand, and be judged. Thus did St. *Paul* adapt and proportion what he spake to the peculiar Wants and Exigences of the Hearer; and in so doing, left us a Pattern worthy of Imitation; such as, when attentively considered, will give us great Occasion to admire the *Dexterity* and *Address*, the *sincere* and *disinterested Conduct*, the mighty *Courage* and *Zeal* of this Eminent Apostle.

What could have more of holy *Art* and *Wisdom* in it, than St. *Paul*'s answering the Enquiries of *Felix* in *such* a Manner, as was most likely to benefit the

SERM. V.

the Enquirer? The *Roman* Governor, led by no other Principle than Curioſity, deſires from St. *Paul* an Account of his Faith: St. *Paul* readily complies, and ſo orders that Account, as to ſet *thoſe* Parts of Chriſtianity in the cleareſt Light before *Felix*, which he wanted moſt to ſee and conſider; *ſo* as to turn off his *general* Apology for the Goſpel into an immediate and cloſe Application of ſome of its chief Doctrines to the *particular* Caſe of *Felix*; and to ſhew him, e'er he is aware, that the Laws both of Chriſtianity and Nature agree, in condemning his Violences and Impurities.

What a *ſincere* and *diſintereſted* Spirit does there appear in St. *Paul* on this Occaſion! He ſtood there accuſed of heinous Crimes, and was ready to ſink under the Malice and mighty Power of his Accuſers, the High Prieſt, and chief Men of the *Jewiſh* Sanhedrim then preſent, and ſoliciting a ſevere Sentence againſt him. And *yet* he ſeems regardleſs of the imminent Peril he

he was in; and, forgetting his own private Interest, any Degree of Concern for himself, turns all his Thoughts, and bends his whole Force towards promoting the general Interest of the Gospel, and the Salvation of Souls. He contrives not how he may gain the *Affections* of his Judge, and make him favourable to his Cause; but how only he may induce him to be kind to himself, and a good *Christian*; how he may render him fit to receive Mercy and Favour from the supreme Judge of Heaven and Earth. What is, if this be not, to preach the Gospel of *Christ* in *Simplicity and godly Sincerity?*

SERM. V.

Lastly, we may observe also, in the Behaviour of St. *Paul*, the Marks of an *Undaunted* and *Exemplary Courage*. He fears not, we see, to utter necessary, though harsh and ungrateful Truths in the Ears of one, who had the Power of Life and Death over him. He knew, with what Dangers the faithful Discharge of his Duty would, in this

SERM. V. this Caſe, be attended; how impatient the Great are, under Reproof, though couched in the moſt gentle and leaſt offenſive Language; what abſolute Empire *Druſilla* had gained over the Heart of *Felix*, and with what Revengefulneſs that impure Woman would be ſure to purſue any one, who ſhould venture to repreſent his Guilt to him, and to rouze his ſleeping Conſcience: And *yet* none of theſe frightening Conſiderations were able to repreſs his Godly Zeal, or to check his Freedom; which he conducted indeed, with great Caution and Prudence, inſinuating his Reproofs under the Cover of ſome Evangelical Doctrines, then propoſed by him: However, with ſo great Force and Succeſs, as to ſtrike Confuſion and Terror into the Perſon, for whom they were intended.

Let us copy the excellent Pattern which this Apoſtle hath ſet us, by taking all proper Opportunities of ſpreading the Kingdom of *Chriſt* in the Hearts of Men, and of advancing the Intereſts

Interests of his Gospel. Let us resolve always to do our Duty, and discharge a good Conscience faithfully, without being deterred by *possible* Inconveniences, or Dangers that *may* attend us for so doing; without suffering *secular* Views, and our own *private* Interests to divert us from pursuing any good Design, whereby we may reasonably hope to promote the Divine Glory, and the Good of Mankind. Let us act in such Cases discreetly indeed, warily, wisely; but withal couragiously, zealously, firmly, as disregarding the Fear of *Man*, when it comes in Competition with the Fear of *God*. These (I say) are the Intimations, these the Instructions given us by the Behaviour of St. *Paul*; when, before an oppressive, a dissolute, and an unbelieving Magistrate, he took an Occasion to Discourse of *Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come.*

In which Discourse of his,

SERM. V.

The *Second* Thing obſervable is, his *Manner* of handling theſe Subjects; *he Reaſoned:* that is, he treated of them in a *Rational* Way; proving from the Nature and Tendency of thoſe Virtues our Obligation to practiſe them; and inferring from thoſe Obligations the Certainty and Neceſſity of a future Account, wherein Notice ſhould be taken how we have, or have not complied with them; and we ſhould be rewarded or puniſhed accordingly. And can any Thing be ſaid more to the Advantage of a *Rational* Way of evincing the Doctrines of *Morality*, and the Truths of the *Goſpel*, than that St. *Paul* practiſed it? He practiſed it, not on *this* only, but on many *other* Occaſions: In his ſeveral Apologies for himſelf and for his Goſpel, recorded in the *Acts*, throughout his Epiſtles ſent to the ſeveral Churches he planted, we find this great Apoſtle of the *Gentiles* continually *Reaſoning*; not merely propoſing Doctrines in an

Autho-

Authoritative Manner, by Virtue of his Apostleship and Commission from God, but proving and making good what he proposes by *Inference* and *Argument.* Thus he frequently did, and by so doing has sanctified *Reason* to the Purposes of *Religion*, and shewed us that *one* Sort (indeed the *best* Sort) of *good Preaching*, consists in *good Arguing.*

SERM. IV.

Some pious and well meaning *Christians* have a very wrong Notion concerning *edifying* Discourses, and profiting by Sermons. They relish nothing from the Pulpit, but what is addressed to their *Passions*, and set out with all the Advantages of a popular Eloquence, and moving Delivery. By this Means they find themselves *inwardly* affected and warmed; and that heating of their *Fancy* they esteem and call *Spiritual Edification.* But when any Point of Doctrine is handled in a Close and Argumentative Manner, it appears flat and unsavoury to them, has nothing in it of the Life and

SERM. IV. *Power of Godlineſs*, and is all mere *human Reaſoning*. But herein they are widely miſtaken; for it is a far greater and more uſeful Work, to inform the *Underſtandings*, and convince the *Judgments* of Men, than to raiſe their *Paſſions*; and that Diſcourſe, which is moſt *Inſtructive*, and beſt ſupported by *Reaſon*, is certainly, if Men attend to it as they ought, moſt *Edifying* too. A Vehement and Voluble *Tongue*, a languiſhing *Tone* of Voice, a pious Set of *Phraſes*, or the like, will very powerfully move the *Affections* of ſome Sort of Hearers; but the Warmth by that Means raiſed, is momentary, and vaniſhing, without any true, ſound, laſting, ſpiritual *Improvement*. To compaſs that, the Way, we find, which the mighty and ſucceſsful Preacher St. *Paul* took, was, to *Reaſon*. Though he were *Divinely* Inſpired, and ſpake therefore, as the *Oracles of God*, with an uncontroulable *Authority*; though he were endued with Supernatural Powers, and could therefore have confirmed

firmed the Truth of what he uttered by *Miracles*; yet in Compliance with the Way in which Human Nature, and Reasonable Creatures are usually wrought upon, he *Reasoned.* But these Reflections have been in some Degree anticipated; and therefore, without enlarging farther upon them, I hasten to consider the SERM. IV.

III. *Third* and *last* Thing observable in the Text, the wonderful *Effect* that followed upon St. *Paul*'s thus *Reasoning* on these important Subjects, *Felix trembled.* His Mind was filled with Horror, at the Remembrance of his *past* Crimes, and the Apprehension of a *future* Reckoning; and these *inward* Fears and Forebodings appeared in the *outward* and visible Marks of a great Consternation.

Though *he* was one of the mightiest Men on Earth, and *Paul*, a poor despised Prisoner; though he was then sitting on the Seat of Judgment, where it behoved him to do nothing that

SERM. IV. miſbecame his high Place and Character; yet could he not diſſemble the Pangs and Agonies of his uneaſy Mind, *he trembled!*

From whence it is natural to obſerve the great Force and Efficacy of the Word of God, duly handled and applied: *It is* (according to the Account of it, given by this very Apoſtle in another Place) *quick and powerful, and ſharper than any two edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing aſunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow, and is a Diſcerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart.* There is no *Sin* ſo ſecret, but that it will find it out and expoſe it; no *Heart* ſo hard, but that it can ſoften it; no *Conſcience* ſo far plunged in a lethargick Sleep, but that it is able to rouze it. Strange are the Inſtances of this Kind recorded in Holy Writ. *Our Lord* opens the Prophecies, and expounds the Scriptures concerning himſelf, to the *two Diſciples* travelling towards *Emmaus*; and, while he is doing

Heb. iv. 12.

Luke xxiv. 13.

ing it, *their Hearts burn within them.* SERM. IV.
Philip points out to the Eunuch the Meaning of a Chapter in *Isaias*; immediately Light and Conviction rush into his Mind; he confesses *Jesus*, and demands Baptism. St. *Peter* preaches the Gospel to a great Multitude of the *Jews*, who had just before been instrumental in the Crucifixion of *Christ*: They no sooner hear him, than they are *pricked to the Heart*, and cry out, *Men and Brethren, what shall we do?* and straightway there are *added to the Faith no* less than Three Thousand *Souls* by this single Sermon. And here in the Text, while St. *Paul is reasoning of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come*, Felix *trembles*. Such is the wonderful Power of Truth, when particularly blessed by the God of Truth, and bid to go forth and prosper! Such is the great and astonishing Influence of the Word of God, when assisted and enlivened by his Spirit! It prevails over all Difficulties, all Opposition, and is *mighty*

Acts viii. 35.

Acts ii. 37.

Acts ii. 41.

2 Cor. x. 4.

SERM. V. *to the pulling down of ſtrong Holds.* Remarkable to this Effect is the different Succeſs of *Tertullus*'s and St. *Paul*'s Pleading. *Tertullus*, we may preſume, was one of the moſt famous Pleaders of his Time; elſe the High Prieſt and Elders, in a Cauſe of ſuch Conſequence (which they themſelves went from *Jeruſalem* to *Cæſarea* on Purpoſe to proſecute) would not have pitched upon *him* for their Advocate. And yet this great *Orator*, with all his ſtudied Art and Eloquence, made no Impreſſion on *Felix*; whereas St. *Paul*'s Speech ſoon afterwards moved, terrified, confounded him. The Reaſon of which different Effect ſeems to have been, that the *one* was with good Words to varniſh over an ill Cauſe, and by the Power of Oratory to ſupport a falſe and lying Accuſation: Whereas the *other* had Right and Truth on his ſide, and therefore preſſed them earneſtly: He himſelf felt what he ſpake, had an inward and vital Senſe of thoſe Truths he delivered; and therefore

therefore he made others feel them too; he ſpake *from* his own Heart, and *to* the Hearts and Conſciences of thoſe that heard him; and *therefore* he prevailed.

How ſhould this Inſtance of the operative Virtue of *God*'s Word reproach our Sluggiſhneſs and Inſenſibility? An impure and wicked *Heathen* (we hear) trembled at St. *Paul*'s Doctrine. The *ſame Doctrine* ſounds every Day in the Ears of negligent *Chriſtians*, without terrifying, without alarming them. The *ſame Apoſtle* ſtill *Reaſons* with them in his Epiſtles, *concerning Righteouſneſs, Temperance, and Judgment to come:* But he *reaſons* to no Purpoſe; his *Words ſeem to them as idle Tales*; they neither feel their *Force*, not regard their *Meaning*. Surely for this *Felix* ſhall one Day riſe up in Judgment againſt them; for *he* heard and *trembled.*

I obſerve *(Secondly)* that though *Felix* ſhewed great Concern on that Occaſion, yet *Druſilla*, the Partner of his

SERM. V.

his Crimes, did, for ought appears, ſit by altogether unmoved with the Apoſtle's Diſcourſe. The moſt probable Account of which ſeems to be this; that *ſhe*, being born and bred a *Jewess*, had better Opportunities of knowing the Will of God and her own Duty, and greater Obligations to practiſe what ſhe knew, than *thoſe* who were guided only by the Light of Nature and Reaſon. And yet, notwithſtanding the mighty Reſtraints which her Religion laid upon her, ſhe had forſaken her Marriage Vows, and gone from the Bed of her Huſband, who was circumciſed, into that of an uncircumciſed Heathen. For which Reaſon *her Guilt* was of a much deeper Dye than that of *Felix* was; and conſequently her Heart more obdurate, and inſenſible of Reproof. From whence we may raiſe to ourſelves this general and uſeful Reflection; that the more Advantages any Man has towards diſcovering the Truth, and the more freely the Means of Grace have been

been indulged to him, the more desperate in his Case, if he happens to revolt, and the harder will the Task be, if he turns profligate, to reclaim him. It is a Work of much less Difficulty to make a good *Christian* of a professed Heathen, than to bring an ill *Christian*, who now lives like an Heathen, to a feeling Sense of his Sins, and to any Degree of true Remorse and Compunction of Heart for them.

SERM. V.

Let us hear the Issue of the whole Matter — What the *Consequences* of these Tremblings of *Felix* was, and how long they continued upon him, the Context will inform us. He abruptly breaks off the Discourse with St. *Paul*, and dismisses him in Haste. *Go thy way* (says he) *for this Time, when I have a convenient Season I will call for thee!* But he soon recovers from his Fright; for it presently follows — *He hoped also, that Money should have been given him of* Paul, *that he might loose him; wherefore he sent for him the oftner, and communed with*

SERM. V. *with him.* We ſee *the Seed* of the Word, ſown by the Apoſtle, *fell among Thorns, and immediately the Thorns ſprung up, and choked it:* The Love of unjuſt and oppreſſive Gain quickly returned upon *Felix*, and drove out the Impreſſions of St. *Paul*'s Reaſonings; and when he had *once* ſtood the Shock of his Conſcience, and got the better of his Fears, he afterwards heard the *ſame Things* ſaid, without any Degree of the *ſame* Remorſe and Concern. *He ſent for St.* Paul *often, and communed with him*, with no other Deſign but that of gratifying his Curioſity, and extorting a Bribe from him— So ſuddenly and eaſily may the beſt Reflections be ſtifled, and the ſtrongeſt Convictions overborn by the Force of any one prevailing Vice, or Luſt, that hath gotten an abſolute Dominion over us!

Satan

Matt. xiii. 7.

That this may not be our Caſe, whenever we hear an awakening Diſcourſe from the Pulpit, and find our Conſciences touched to the Quick with ſome

SERM. V.

some apposite Passages of it; let us not forthwith endeavour to get rid of the Smart, and to dismiss such troublesome Reflections, as *Felix* did; *Go your way for this time, when I have a convenient Season I will call for you.* Nay, but *this* is the proper *Time*, *this* the most convenient *Season* for our entertaining them, and conversing with them, when they press to be admitted, and heard. Take not therefore something, as the Way is, to put off the Fit; call not in Company, Business, or Pleasure to divert your Thoughts from their present melancholy Employment; but rather study every way to cherish and promote these good *Beginnings* by Retirement, Meditation, and Prayer! *Commune with your own Heart in your Chamber, and be still there*; suffer these *Terrors of the Lord* freely to reason and plead with you, *till* they have *persuaded* you *there* in *private*; re-apply, and inforce, and improve those good Impressions, you received in *public*, till you have riveted the Influence of

Psal. iv. 11.

SERM. V. of them fast into your Mind, and reached the End for which the good Spirit of God intended them; even till (by the Means of them) you have wrought out a *Repentance to Salvation not to be repented of!*

2 Cor. vii. 10.

Which that all of us may attain, God of his infinite Mercy grant, through the Merits of Christ *our Saviour, to whom, with the Father and the blessed Spirit, be ascribed all Power and Praise, now and for ever.*

THE

THE CROSS of *CHRIST* THE Only Thing we ought to glory in, AND THE PROPER METHODS of Glorying in It.

Of Glorying in the Cross of CHRIST:

A SERMON

Preached at

St. JAMES's Chapel,

ON

GOOD-FRIDAY, 1718.

GAL. vi. 14.

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, *whereby the World is crucified unto me, and I unto the World.*

GOD *forbid!* A Manner of Speech familiar, and almost peculiar to St. *Paul*; frequently employed by him in his Writings, thrice in

SERM. VI.

SERM. VI. in this very Epiſtle; never, but where he intends, with a particular Degree of Earneſtneſs and Vehemence, to condemn ſome Doctrine or Practice imputed to *Chriſtians*, or prevailing among them; by which he thought Chriſtianity highly diſhonoured. In ſuch Caſes, it is uſual with him to expreſs his Diſlike, his Deteſtation of ſuch Doctrine, or Practice, by this emphatical Phraſe, μὴ γένοιτο, which we tranſlate, *God forbid!*

The ſpecial Occaſion of his employing it here in the Text, was this: The *Gentile* Converts among the *Galatians*, after St. *Paul*'s Departure from them, had been ſeduced by ſome falſe Teachers, who were *Jews*, into a Belief, that the *Law of Moſes* was not entirely aboliſhed, but that Circumciſion, and the other Rites of it, were ſtill neceſſary to be obſerved by all thoſe, who, being *Heathens*, intended to become *Chriſtians*. This Opinion had been entertained, and ſpread by theſe falſe Teachers, partly

ly through a superstitious Reverence for their *Law*, and a mistaken Notion of the true Nature and Design of the *Gospel*; and partly, with a View of lessening the Prejudices, which the *Jews* had conceived against the Doctrine of *Christ*; and of avoiding the Persecutions, which they every where raised against those, who propagated, or professed it. SERM. VI.

The Apostle having argued against these Teachers, and their Opinions, strongly and fervently in various Parts of this Epistle, returns to the same Subject at the Close of it; and there sums up in short, what he had before more largely delivered. *As many* (says he) *as desire to make a fair shew in the Flesh* [Εὐπροσωπῆσαι ἐν σαρκὶ, a Phrase of his own, which signifies, to act upon carnal Views, and for worldly Ends, and to study popular and plausible Appearances] *they constrain you to be circumcised, only lest they should suffer Persecution for the Cross of* Christ. [Not so much out of a Con-

SERM. VI. viction of the Neceſſity of what they urge upon you, as that they may live eaſily, and carry Things ſmoothly with all Men.] For, as it follows, *neither They* [theſe falſe Teachers] *themſelves, who are Circumciſed, keep the Law; but deſire to have you Circumciſed.* To what End? Even *that they may glory in your Fleſh*; that they may boaſt of having made you Proſelytes to *Judaiſm*, in the Way to *Chriſtianity*, and by that Means recommend themſelves to their Countrymen, on the Account of their Zeal for the *Law of Moſes*, at the ſame Time that they would be thought to ſerve the Intereſts of the Goſpel. *But* let them conſult their own Safety, and affect a falſe Glory by this inſincere Conduct, if they pleaſe; *God forbid* (ſays he) *that I ſhould glory, ſave in the Croſs of our Lord* Jeſus Chriſt! God forbid, that I ſhould act upon any ſuch *worldly* Views and Motives in the Propagation of the Doctrine of *Chriſt*, or think to promote it by *any* Methods, but what

what are agreeable to the Nature and Deſign of it: It is the Doctrine of the Croſs, and ought therefore to be preached in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, without worldly Hopes or Fears, without Arts and Diſguiſes: The chief Article of this Doctrine, that wherein the great Lines of it center, is, the Satiſfaction made to Divine Juſtice, by the Sufferings and Death of a Crucified Saviour. By this Sacrifice of the Croſs all the legal Sacrifices and Ceremonies are determined and aboliſhed; by this, and this only, a real Atonement is made to God for our Sins, and a Way opened to his Favour: On this, conſequently, all the Hopes and Happineſs of a *Chriſtian* depend. Mean therefore and ignominious as the Circumſtances of this Tranſaction were, I will not be offended at them myſelf, nor fear leſt others ſhould be offended: On this Subject I will perpetually dwell in my private Meditations, and in my publick Inſtructions: Of this Capital Article of the Chriſtian Faith I will not only not

SERM. VI. be ashamed, but I will boast; I will *glory* in it, and in nothing beyond, or besides it: For it is a Doctrine full of Wonder and Delight, of Instruction, Advantage, and Comfort to sincere Believers, to penitent Sinners; since it is that, *whereby the World is Crucified unto me, and I unto the World. Whereby the World is Crucified unto me: All that is in the World, the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life*, is rendered, though not incapable of *polluting* me, yet ineffectual towards *condemning* me; the Sting of Sin is taken away, the Guilt is pardoned; and *I am crucified unto the World:* I am, by the victorious Power of that Grace, which was purchased by this Sacrifice of the Cross, become insensible, and dead, as it were, to the Pleasures, the Pomps and Vanities of this World; I have *crucified the Flesh, with the Affections and Lusts.* Since therefore the Sufferings of *Christ* are of so great Efficacy and Power, as to be able to free me, not only from the

Gal. v. 24.

the Guilt and Puniſhment of Sin, but also from the Dominion and Power of it; is there any Thing I ſhould value myſelf upon, in Compariſon of the Privilege of being made a Partaker of the Merits of theſe Sufferings? in Compariſon of the Mercies, the Advantages I enjoy, by the Means of this humble, but admirable Diſpenſation? Let others form to themſelves what Schemes of Satisfaction and Happineſs, pride themſelves in what Preeminences, what Diſtinctions they pleaſe; *But God forbid that I ſhould glory, ſave in the Croſs of our Lord* Jeſus Chriſt, *whereby the World is crucified unto me, and I unto the World!*

SERM. VI.

I have largely explained the *Connection*, and thereby opened the *Meaning* of theſe Words of St. *Paul:* The *Uſe* I intend to make of them is, from thence to ſhew,

I. *Firſt*, That whatever Excellencies, ouward Advantages, or Privileges, it may be our Lot to enjoy, yet it mis-

SERM. VI. becomes us, as we are *Christians*, to *glory* in them: But that,

II. *Secondly*, It highly becomes us to *glory in the Cross* of *Christ*.

III. *Thirdly*, By what *Methods*, and in Opposition to what Enemies of the Cross of *Christ*, we are *obliged to glory* in it.——Of these *three* Points in their Order, as far as the Time will permit. And,

I. *First*, I am to shew, That whatever Excellencies, outward Advantages, or Privileges it may be our Lot to enjoy, yet it misbecomes us, as we are *Christians*, to *glory* in them.

I do not say, that we are to be insensible of such Advantages, to have no Relish of them, no Complacence in them: For neither Reason nor Religion require such a Conduct from us. They are the good Things of Life, given us by the Author of all Good, on purpose that we should, in due Measure

Meaſure and Seaſon, enjoy them; nor can they of themſelves, while our Appetites, and our Opinions concerning ſuch Things are well regulated, be hurtful to thoſe who poſſeſs them. They may be *uſed*, if they are not *over-valued*; if we do not ſuffer our Affections to cleave too cloſely to them, and our Minds to be in any degree elated, and ſwelled by a Reflection upon them. They may be a *Part*, a *ſmall* Part of our Happineſs in this tranſitory Scene of Life, provided we always retain in our Minds the Apoſtle's Directions concerning them, That they, *who have* theſe Things, *be as though they had them not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they poſſeſſed not; and they that uſe this World, as not abuſing it; for the Faſhion of this World paſſeth away:* Theſe worldly Advantages, theſe Honours, Profits, Pleaſures, whatever they be, are of uncertain Continuance, and may in a little Time ſlip away from us; to be ſure,

SERM. VI.

1 Cor. vii. 30, 31.

SERM. VI. ſure, we ſhall in a little Time ſlip away from them, and leave them behind us: And therefore, why ſhould we reſt in them? Why ſhould we boaſt of them? Why ſhould we feed and raiſe, not our Appetites and Luſts only, but our Vanity and Pride alſo, by the Means of them?

The Chriſtian Religion, by the Tendency of all its Doctrines (particularly that of *Chriſt* crucified) by the manner of its Progreſs, and the mean Characters of thoſe who firſt promulged and embraced it, ſeems to have been ſo throughout contrived, as effectually to mortify, and beat down any undue Complacence we may have in ourſelves on ſuch Occaſions. *Ye ſee your Calling, Brethren* (ſays St. *Paul* with that παῤῥησία, that becoming Freedom of Speech, in which he excels) *how that not many wiſe Men after the Fleſh, not many Mighty, not many Noble are called; but God hath choſen the fooliſh Things of the World to confound the Wiſe; and God hath choſen the weak*

1 Cor i. 26.

Things

Things of the World, to confouud the Things which are mighty; and the base Things of the World, and the Things which are despised hath he chosen, yea, and the Things which are not, to bring to nought the Things that are. And to what end did he thus order Matters in the Propagation of his Gospel? Even to this (as it follows) *that no Flesh should glory in his Presence*, but that *he who glorieth might glory in the Lord*; might value himself upon being a serious sincere *Christian*, and upon nothing besides it.

SERM. VI.

Indeed it is enough to disparage all the fine Shews and Appearances of this Life, and to render us indifferent to all the Charms of it, if we do but attentively consider that compleat Instance of suffering Greatness and Goodness, on which our Faith and Devotion ought this Day to be employed. For on this Day they were all, together with *the Handwriting of Ordinances*, (the ceremonious Observances of the Law) *blotted out*, sullied, and defaced, and

Col. ii. 14.

SERM. VI.

and *nailed by* Christ *to his Cross*, as the Scripture speaks; on which when he was lifted up, he did there crucify the World, and the Things of it, eclipse the Lustre, and destroy the Power of all its empty Vanities. Behold then our High-priest, offering up the great Sacrifice required for the Redemption of Souls! pouring out his own Blood on the Altar of his Cross, and thereby making an Atonement for the Sins of the whole World! Behold him, I say, by the Eye of Faith, and you will acknowledge, that though there was never any Spectacle so sad, yet neither was there ever any so glorious, or so worthy of being contemplated and admired by Men and Angels. Stript indeed he was of all outward Comforts and Supports, surrounded he was with every Thing that to human Nature was grievous: And yet, even in this Depth of his Humiliation, if we consider the mighty Work he was accomplishing, we cannot but despise all the vain Pomps of Life, in comparison of the

the Splendor of his Sufferings. For then, even then, while he hung on the Cross, was the great Captain of our Salvation fighting our Battles, and subduing our Enemies; then was he *leading Captivity captive, spoiling Principalities and Powers, making a Shew of them openly, and triumphing over them in himself:* Then was he vanquishing Death by his Death, and opening for us a Gate to Life and Immortality: Then was he disarming Sin of its Sting, and Hell of its Terrors; and procuring for us those Supplies of Grace, which might enable us to withstand the Temptations of Sense, and the Wiles of the Devil.

Eph. iv. 8. Col. ii. 15.

Surely the vain Glories of this World, when compared with these real Triumphs of the Cross of *Christ*, must lose all their Force and Influence, and grow flat and insignificant in the Eyes of a good *Christian*. Can we look up to him that was pierced, see him stretched on his Cross, enduring the Pain, despising the Shame of it, and not

SERM. VI. not look down with Neglect and Contempt on that Scene of Sin and Vanity which occasioned those Sufferings? Is

1 John ii. 15. it possible for us to *love the World, and the Things that are in the World*, while our Eyes are fixed on him, who

Gal. i. 4. *gave himself for our Sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil World*; that is, on purpose that he might free us from the enchanting Power of its empty Delights, and vain Allurements? These he taught us, by his Doctrine and by his Practice, by his Life and by his Death, to undervalue; he chose to be without them, and the Perfection of *his* Virtue consisted in overlooking and despising them. *We* therefore, who profess to be his Followers, must certainly degenerate very far from that Profession, when we eagerly pursue, greedily enjoy, and highly admire them.

1 Cor. v. 6. Beloved, this *our glorying is not good*, But,

II. *Secondly*, It highly becomes us to *glory in the Cross of* Christ, as I proposed,

poſed, in the ſecond Place to ſhew. For ſince by the alone Merits of his Croſs we gain all the Advantages of the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, are reconciled to God, and made capable of Heaven and Happineſs, we cannot but glory in that Croſs, if indeed we value ourſelves upon our being *Chriſtians*.

The Croſs of *Chriſt* is the Doctrine, to which all the other Doctrines of the Goſpel refer, and from which they derive all the Efficacy and Influence they have, towards purging our Conſciences from dead Works; and therefore in that ſingle Article they are often all of them ſummed up and comprized. *We preach Chriſt crucified*, ſays St. *Paul*; as if that, and that alone were the Subject of all he wrote, and all he ſpoke: And again, *I determined to know nothing but Chriſt, and him crucified*; as if that were the great Point of ſaving *Knowledge*, to which thoſe who *learn*, or who *teach* the Religion of *Chriſt*, ſhould altogether apply themſelves. Can we look upon it, under

1 Cor. i. 23.

1 Cor. ii. 2.

this

SERM. VI.

this View, and refrain from *glorying* in it? To *this* Article of our Faith the Enemies of the Gospel have always taken the greatest Exceptions; and in *this* therefore we ought to triumph most, as being secure against their Attacks, and despising their vain Objections and Reasonings. The first Preachers of our Faith must, in this Case, be our Patterns. They knew that *Christ crucified* was *to the Jews a Stumbling-Block*; but did they therefore dissemble the Scandal of the Cross for that very Reason? No! they boasted of it, they insisted upon it in all their Applications to the unbelieving *Jews*, recorded in the *Acts*; particularly Saint *Peter* omits no occasion of mentioning to them Him *whom they slew, and hanged on a Tree*; as an high Reproach to his Murderers indeed, but none at all to his Disciples and Followers.

1 Cor. i. 23.

Acts x. 39.

Very fitly therefore has the Church of *England* appointed that, after we have been *received into the Congregation*

tion of Chriſt's Flock by Baptiſm, we ſhould be *ſigned with the Sign of the Croſs, in token* (as ſhe ſpeaks) *that we ſhould not hereafter be aſhamed to confeſs the Faith of Chriſt crucified, but ſhould manfully fight under his Banner againſt Sin, the World and the Devil, and continue Chriſt's faithful Soldiers and Servants to our Lives Ends.* A Ceremony, which, whatever Fault may have been found with it, is certainly very Antient, very Innocent, and very ſignificant too; as it fitly admoniſhes us, throughout the whole Courſe of our Chriſtian Warfare, to look upon the Croſs of *Chriſt* as the proper Badge of our Profeſſion, which we ought not to be aſhamed, or afraid to own, whenever He, in whoſe Service we are liſted, ſhall call upon us to take it up, and follow him. But to proceed, I am to ſhew,

SERM. VI.

III. *Thirdly*, By what *Methods*, and in oppoſition to what Enemies of the Croſs of *Chriſt* we are *Obliged to Glory* in it.

SERM. VI.

1. Now the *first* Step requisite towards our complying with this Obligation is, frequently to meditate on the Sufferings and Death of *Christ*. We glory in nothing but what we esteem and value; and what we value much, we shall be apt often and attentively to consider. We should therefore revolve often in our Thoughts this *great Mystery of Godliness, God manifest in the Flesh, dying on the Cross, to destroy the Works of the Devil:* We should turn it on all Sides, and consider it, as the proper Subject of our Awe and Wonder, our Joy and Pleasure, our Gratitude and Love; 'till we have warmed our Hearts with a lively Sense of the inestimable Benefits conferred on us by the Means of it. This the oftener we do, the better: But we cannot, without inexcusable Negligence, omit doing it on such a Day as this, set apart by the Church on Purpose to commemorate the *Passion* of our Lord. If we fail to employ some Part of this Day in our Closets, and in devout Meditations

1 Tim. iii. 16.

ons on the Cross of *Christ*, we are unworthy of that Redemption he purchased for us. *What* (said our Saviour to his sleeping Disciples, when he was entring on his Agony) *can you not watch with me one Hour!* Can you not shake off your Drowsiness, and bear me Company in my Sorrows for a few Moments, on so important and becoming an Occasion? Can your sluggish Inattention and Indifference to what concerns me so nearly, consist with a true Love of me, or with the Character of my faithful Disciples; *What! can you not watch with me one Hour? Watch and pray, lest ye enter into Temptation.*

SERM. VI.

Mat. xxvi. 40.

2. A Second Step towards fulfilling our Obligation to glory in the Cross of *Christ*, is, if we endeavour to imitate the perfect Example he hath set us, and to form in our Minds some faint Resemblances of those meek Graces and Virtues, which adorn the Character of our suffering Saviour. And this Step is a natural Consequence of the former;

SERM. VI. mer; for *Imitation* will in ſome Degree ſpring from *Attention*: If *we ſee him as he is*, we *ſhall be like him*, as St. *John* argues. In vain do we boaſt of the Croſs of *Chriſt*, as that whereby the *Guilt* of our Sins is aboliſhed, if the *Power* of them ſtill remains unſubdued in us: Then are his Sufferings our Glory, when they become a fruitful Principle of Holineſs to us, and affect us in ſuch a Manner, as to give us Reſolution and Strength to live above the World, and all its Temptations. *In hoc vince*, was the Inſcription on the Croſs, in that Viſion, by which the firſt *Chriſtian Emperor* was encouraged to give Battle to his Enemies. And this alſo is the Motto, by which every good *Soldier of Chriſt* is to animate himſelf in his ſpiritual Conflicts; this is to be written on our Banners, and graven in our Minds: *This is the Victory which overcometh the World, even our Faith* in a crucified *Jeſus*. When from Him we have learnt to undervalue the falſe Glories of this World,

1 John iii. 2.

1 John v. 4.

World, and to despise its Terrors, to live above the Gratifications of Sense, to resign ourselves absolutely to God's Disposal, and to make it *our Meat and our Drink*, our only Study and Delight, *to do the Will of him that sent us*; when we shall have emptied ourselves of all swelling Thoughts, all vain Conceits of our own Privileges and Perfections, and shall be thoroughly instructed in that great Lesson of Humility, which he, who was *meek and lowly in Heart*, hath taught us; when we shall have so *considered him that endured the Contradiction of Sinners against himself, as not to be weary and faint in our Minds*, upon the like Oppositions and Trials; so, as to bear Indignities and Injuries decently and well, and to forgive and pray for those who do them; so as to be able to support ourselves under any of the Calamities of Life with Equanimity and Patience, with Fortitude and Firmness: Then may we be said, most truly, most effectually to glory in the

SERM. VI.

John iv. 34.

Matt. xi. 29.

Heb. xii. 3.

SERM. VI.

Cross of *Christ ourselves*, and to promote the Honour of his Religion with *others*, who shall observe our Progress in all divine Graces and Virtues, and be edified in beholding *our good Conversation in Christ Jesus.*

3. A *Third* Instance and Proof of our glorying as becomes us in the Cross of *Christ*, is, if we frequently and worthily celebrate the Memorial of his Death, the blessed Sacrament of his Body and Blood. *For as often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's Death, until he come*, καταγγέλλετε, ye do significantly express it, ye do solemnly publish and declare it. Indeed *both* the Sacraments that of *Baptism*, and this of the *Lord's Supper*, as they derive their Efficacy from the *Cross* of *Christ*, so do they carry in them some Resemblance of his *Death: Baptism*, of his Death and Resurrection *jointly*; the *Eucharist*, of his Death *only*; being instituted for this very End and Purpose, to imprint on our Minds, by Sym-

1 Cor. xi. 26.

Symbols of Bread broken, and Wine poured out, a lively Image of the great Sacrifice of the Croſs, and to inſpire us, by that Means, with ſuch holy Thoughts and Affections, as a good *Chriſtian* would have, if he were really an Eye Witneſs of the Paſſion of *Chriſt*. Often therefore ought we to reſort to this myſterious Repaſt, even as often as we have Occaſion (and when we have not Occaſion?) to raiſe our Gratitude, and improve our Devotion, and inflame our Love towards God, for the abundant Mercies beſtowed on us, in the Sufferings and Death of our Saviour. Nor can we abſtain from this Table of the Lord, without forgetting (indeed without ſo far renouncing) our Relation to *Chriſt* crucified, and thereby declaring ourſelves utterly unworthy of that holy Name whereby we are called. *Verily, verily, except* we *eat the Fleſh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood*, we *have no Life in* us. John vi. 53.

SERM. VI.

'Twas his dying Charge to us, *Do this in Remembrance of me:* And ſurely, Luke xxii. 16.

SERM. VI. considering how much he has done and suffered for us, had he commanded us *some hard Thing*, we should not have refused to comply with him: How much less should we refuse, when we are only commanded to remember him, by an Action naturally pleasing and delightful to us? when he invites us only to eat and to drink at his own Table?

Christ, the same Night that he was betrayed, took Bread: At that very Time, when Men were laying Snares for his Innocence, and contriving his Ruin, did he appoint this great Means of blessing and strengthening them: When his Body was now about to be pierced, and his Blood to be spilt by the Hand of Violence; then did he institute this Mystery, by which the Merits of both were to be conveyed to the whole Race of Mankind, even to his Murtherers themselves, if by Faith and Repentance they should lay hold of them. Must not our Stupidity and Ingratitude be as amazing as his Love, if the very Circumstances, in which he

gave

gave us this Precept, do not incline us to obey it? Can we be said to *glory in the Cross of* Christ, while we neglect and despise this great *Memorial* of his Death, which he instituted for the good of Souls? Ought we not rather to fear, lest, by abstaining wilfully and contemptuously from this holy Table, we should involve ourselves in some Degree of *their* Guilt, whom the Apostle declares to *have trodden under Foot the Son of God, and counted the Blood of the Covenant, by which they were sanctified, an unholy Thing?* But finally, we may

Heb. x. 29.

4. In the *Fourth* Place, be said (very properly said) to *glory in the Cross of* Christ, when we zealously assert, and vindicate the true Doctrine of his *Satisfaction*, against all the Enemies and Opposers of it; against the false Notions of the *Jews*, and the false Religion of the *Mahometans*; against the mischievous Opinions of some *deceived*, or *deceiving Christians*; against the vain *Pretences* of *Reason* and *Philosophy*, and

SERM. VI. and against the proud *Insults* and *Blasphemies* of *Atheists* and *Infidels*. But these Particulars would open too large a Field of Matter to me at present, and may perhaps (God permitting) be no improper Subject for our Reflections on a like Occasion.

In the mean time, let us conclude, by rendering to the great Lover of Souls the Thanks that are due to Him, for the Redemption, which he, as on this Day, purchased for us.

Revel. v. 12. *Worthy is the Lamb, that was slain, to receive Power, and Riches, and Wisdom, and Strength, and Honour, and*
℣ 9. *Glory, and Blessing: For He hath redeemed us to God by his Blood, out of every Kindred, and Tongue, and People,*
℣ 13. *and Nation. Therefore Blessing, and Honour, and Glory, and Power be unto Him than sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever!* Amen.

EXTER-

EXTERNAL
WORSHIP
A
Fit and Reaſonable Duty.

The Duty of External Worship:

A

SERMON

Preached at the

ROLLS CHAPEL,

April 2, 1699.

PSALM xcv. 6.

O come let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD *our Maker.*

SERM. VII.

THESE Words are taken from an Hymn, which is very fitly placed at the Entrance of the Morning Devotions of the Church: It being a solemn and earnest Invitation to the *publick* Worship of God that follows; and

SERM. VII.

and probably employed to that Purpose at the Beginning of the Service used in the *Jewish* Temple.

In that Hymn we are called upon to pay all the Parts of our *internal* and *external* Homage.

The Words, which I have chosen, mention only the *latter* of these, *outward Adoration*; which they do, by expressing the several *Modes* of it; as *Worshipping*, *Bowing down*, and *Kneeling* before God: *Terms*, which those who are skilled in the Original, have been at some Pains to *explain*, so as to settle the distinct Meaning of *each* of them. I shall wave that Enquiry, as not very useful, and consider the Words in their more free and *general* Sense; as they imply *all* those *devout Postures* of Body, in which *outward* Worship may be supposed to consist.

To press upon you, as effectually as I can, the Exercise of these, when we thus meet together in God's Sanctuary, shall be the Business of my present Discourse.

In

SERM. VII.

In which I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, how requiſite a reverent and pious Demeanour in the publick Service of the Church is, in order to render our Devotions acceptable to God.

This perhaps, at firſt ſight, may ſeem too plain a Propoſition to need any Proof: And it will be thought, that there is no good *Chriſtian* in the World, who is not very well ſatisfied of the Truth of it. And yet, certain it is, that there are, among thoſe who aim at a more than ordinary Purity in the Worſhip of God, many ſincere but deluded Perſons, who diſapprove and deny it; who think external Modes of Worſhip, not only *unneceſſary*, but *ſuperſtitious*, now under the Goſpel Diſpenſation, when, they ſay, all *bodily* Service is done away, the Law of *outward* Rites and Ceremonies is aboliſhed, and the *true* Worſhippers of God are to *worſhip him* only *in Spirit and Truth*. John iv. 24.

And even among thoſe who admit the Neceſſity of *bodily* Worſhip in the *Theory*,

SERM. VII.

Theory, yet how many are there that deny it in their *Practice*, and ſo behave themſelves in the publick Service of the Church, as to make it appear, that this Truth has not yet in good earneſt reached their Hearts, or not ſunk very deep into them: Or if it has, the Impreſſions it once made upon their Minds, are now grown ſo faint and weak, that they operate but little, unleſs by proper Arguments and Motives they be continually excited and kept alive in them.

In order therefore to convince thoſe who ſeem not to have ſufficiently *conſidered* the Importance of this Duty; and in order alſo to raiſe the Devotion of ſuch as are remiſs and careleſs in the Diſcharge of it; I ſhall, in what follows, conſider *External Worſhip*, as a fit and reaſonable Duty, upon theſe three ſeveral Accounts. Either as one Part of that *natural Homage*, which the *whole* Man, Soul and Body, does, by the firſt Principles of *Reaſon*, and Law of his *Nature*, owe to his ſove-

reign

reign Lord, his great Creator and Preſerver. Or as an *Help* and *Aſſiſtance* towards promoting the *ſpiritual* Worſhip of our *Souls*. Or laſtly, as an *outward Sign*, by which we expreſs to *others* the Religious Eſteem and Veneration that dwells in *us*: That is (in a Word) it may be conſidered with relation to *God*, *Ourſelves*, or our *Neighbour*.

SERM. VII.

Firſt then, *External* Adoration may be conſidered as a Part of that *natural Homage*, which the *whole* Man, Soul and Body, owes to God, upon the Account of his Creation and Preſervation *of* us; and his ſovereign Dominion over us. I.

If we are to worſhip God for the Being, and the Benefits which we receive at his Hands, as the plain Rules of Reaſon inform us; then does it ſeem agreeable to the ſame Reaſon, that we ſhould make Uſe of *all* thoſe ſeveral Ways of Worſhip, which do beſt expreſs the *total* and *entire* Dependance

SERM. VII.

we have on him. The *Soul* worſhips him, by framing to itſelf awful Ideas of his Majeſty and great Excellencies, by invoking Aid and Aſſiſtance from him, and by putting up Praiſes to him. The *Body* worſhips him, by bowing and proſtrating itſelf; and by all thoſe humble and devout Poſtures, which ſuit beſt with thoſe *inward* Affections and Diſpoſitions of the Mind. *Both* together make up that compleat Harmony of Divine Worſhip, which reſults from the Agreement of the ſeveral Parts of our Frame in the ſame Acts of Acknowledgment, that *Odour of a ſweet Smell, a Sacrifice acceptable, well pleaſing to God.*

Phil. iv. 18.

Indeed, as we have no Way of forming to ourſelves any Idea of God, but by conſidering the ſeveral limited Perfections and Excellencies, that are variouſly ſcattered among his Creatures, and attributing them to *him without Bounds*; ſo have we no other Way of applying ourſelves to him, as his Vaſſals, his Dependants, and the Works of

of his Hands, than by conſidering what are thoſe *inward* and *outward* Marks of Reſpect, which we uſually pay to the *Dignity* of any *Man* here upon Earth, to his *Authority* over us, or his *Beneficence* towards us; and by giving them to *God*, in a much *higher* Degree, than we do to *Man*. Now, the Expreſſion of our Eſteem of any Earthly Good, the Reſpect we bear towards Perſons of great Excellence, Parents, Benefactors, or Governors, is contained in theſe *Two* Things; a Veneration of *Mind* for them, and a Submiſſion of *Body* to them.

And whoever fails in *either* of theſe, is, by the general Conſent of Mankind, reckoned to be ſo far wanting in his Duty, and to deviate from thoſe Rules of Subordination, which God has made neceſſary for this World.

Of this the Mind of Man is very ſenſible; and being therefore conſcious of the ſuperlative Excellencies of the Divine Being, and of the infinite Goodneſs of its Nature towards us, finds it-

SERM. VII.

ſelf uneaſy under theſe Apprehenſions, 'till it has paid its *due Homage*, its *Debt* of Honour to it. Which, nevertheleſs it has no *Ability* to do, otherwiſe than by applying to *God* thoſe *outward* ſenſible Marks of Reſpect, and thoſe *inward* Submiſſions of Soul, which are in Uſe among the Sons of *Men*.

To theſe therefore it flies, theſe it lays hold of, eager and impatient to do *ſomething* (it knows not well *what*) in humble Acknowledgment of his Attributes, and in Return to his many loving Kindneſſes.

It ſees very well, how diſproportioned all our Acts of Homage are to the Divine Greatneſs: That God dwells in inacceſſible Light, to which none of our Services can reach; in the Glory of an eternal Majeſty, which nothing we can do, can either add to, or diminiſh. Nevertheleſs perceiving in itſelf a reſtleſs Principle, exciting it continually to the Love and Honour of God; ſtrong Endeavours after Gratitude, and no other Way of exerting them,

them, but by *inward* and *outward* Acts of Worſhip; theſe, how inſignificant ſoever, it ventures to pay, in ſure Confidence, that they will be grateful to that Being, which *accepteth according to that a Man hath, and not according to that he hath not.* SERM. VII. 2 Cor. viii. 12.

Thus does *External* Adoration become a Point of *Natural Homage*, due to the ſupreme Lord of the World, in Token of that entire Dependance we have on him; the Dependance of the *whole* Man, *Soul* and *Body*, which *both* equally came forth from his Hands, and are *both* equally ſuſtained by him. *Both* therefore muſt join in paying the common Tribute of Praiſe; which, however to *Him* it may be nothing worth, of leſs Account than *a Drop of the Bucket*, or a *ſmall Duſt of the Ballance*, yet to *Us-ward* is the very *Law* of our Nature, and our bounden *Duty* and Service. Iſ. xl. 15.

And *this* is a Way of Reaſoning, which the Holy Ghoſt in *both* Teſtaments hath ſanctified, and taught us to uſe.

SERM. VII.

We are invited by the good *Psalmist* in my Text, to *bow down, and kneel before God.* And the Reason follows: *For he is the Lord our God, and we are the People of his Hands.* Agreeably to which the Apostle urges us, to *glorify God in our Body, and in our Spirit, which are God's.* We are to glorify him in our *Body*, as well as our *Spirit*; by *outward* as well as *inward* Devotion: Since there is the same Argument for both, they are God's: *His* they are, and to *Him* they must do their Homage.

And therefore 'tis a remarkable Passage, which the same Apostle hath: *I beseech you, Brethren, by the Mercies of God, that you present your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God; which is your reasonable Service.* Though he mentions only the presenting our *Bodies*, yet he gives that the Name of our *reasonable Service*, ἡ λογικὴ λατρεία ὑμῶν, a Worship agreeable to *Reason*, and to the Suggestions of our natural Faculties.

Rom. xii. 1.

We

We all look for the Glorification, not only of our *Souls*, but *Bodies*, in the Life to come. Now a *Reward* ſuppoſeth a *Work:* It is meet and right therefore, that we ſhould worſhip and glorify God in *this* Life with the *Body* as well as the *Soul*, if ſo be we expect that God ſhould glorify *both our Bodies and Souls in another*. The *outward* Worſhip, without the *inward* is dead; and again, the *inward*, without the *outward*, is not complete; even as the Glorification of the *Soul*, ſeparate from the *Body*, is not, nor ſhall be conſummate, till the *Body* be again raiſed, and reunited to it.

Indeed, they who derogate ſo much from *bodily* Worſhip in the Service of the true God, do by Conſequence render *Idolatry* a *Sin* far leſs heinous in Degree than it is. For the *Sin of Idolatry* conſiſts, we know, in our communicating that Honour to a Creature, which is due unto the Creator alone. And therefore, in the ſame Proportion as external Worſhip is due to the Crea-

SERM. VII. tor, will the Grievousness and Guilt of *that* Sin be, by which we transfer that Worship from the Creator to the Creature; for it cannot be denied, but that *Part* of the Sin of *Idolatry* consists even in the *outward* Worship given to an *Idol*. And therefore, if *outward* Worship be not insisted on with any Strictness now under the Gospel, as a Debt due to *God*, neither will the paying it to *Idols* be in any high Degree culpable.

Thus does the Consideration of *outward* Worship, as it respects *God*, the Object of it, afford us one powerful Motive to a composed and solemn Behaviour in the *publick* Service of the Church. Let us see, what Force it will have, as it relates to *ourselves*; Or as it is,

II. *Secondly*, an Help and Assistance, towards promoting the spiritual Worship of our *Souls*.

There is so close a *Connexion* between the *Mind* and its *Organs*, that they

they act, as it were, by Conſent; and the Motions of the *one* do commonly, and in ſome Degree, paſs into the *other*. And this natural *Sympathy* ſhews itſelf no where more remarkably than in Acts of Devotion. When the *Mind* is warmed with heavenly Thoughts, and wrought up into ſome Degrees of holy Ecſtacy, it ſtays not there, but communicates theſe Impreſſions to the *Body*; and excites thoſe ſeveral Actions, without, that carry a Reſemblance to what is done *within*.

On the *other* Side, devout Poſtures of *Body*, when perceived and attended to by him that uſes them, do *as* certainly paſs onward and impart their Force to the *Mind* alſo; raiſing there thoſe ſeveral Paſſions and Emotions, to which the outward Act is naturally conjoined. 'Tis true, the Riſe of all is originally from *within*; *there* the Springs of Action firſt begin to play; and from *thence* Orders are ſent out to the *Body*, what Motions ſhall ariſe. But then, after that, *this Engine*, thus moved

SERM. VII. moved, acts backward upon its first Principle, the *Soul*; returns the Force, that was lent it from thence, with Interest; and improves that *Spark* of holy Fire, which first sprung up there, into a great and mighty *Flame*.

External Worship then becomes this way a just and reasonable *Duty*, inasmuch as it is naturally fitted to excite like *inward* Acts of Devotion; and being itself perceived, does, in a Way not perceived by those who yet feel the Effects of it, work upon the most hidden Powers of the Mind. And it is very well it does so: For the Mind of Man is in the Duties of Religion so little *Mistress* of strict Attention, so unable to fix itself steadily even on God, its best and worthiest Object, that it cannot have too many Assistances from *without*, in order to it. As therefore God hath so tempered the *Body* together in all its *Members*, that *the Eye cannot say unto the Hand, I have no need of thee; nor the Head again unto the Feet, I have no need of you*; so has he also

1 Cor. xii. 21.

alſo tempered the *whole Frame* of Man in ſuch a Manner, as that the Parts of it may mutually ſupport each other. Nor can the *Soul*, in its moſt ſpiritual and ſublime Acts, thoſe of Devotion, reject the *Body*, as uſeleſs and unaſſiſting. *Nay much more* (as St. *Paul* continues his Reaſoning) *that Part, which ſeems to be more feeble, is neceſſary.* 1 Cor. xii. 22.

We uſually blame the *Body* to an high Degree, as the great Clog and Hindrance of the *Soul*; the Obſtructer of its free and natural Motions, the Offerer of impious, of filthy, of vain Images; the Sollicitor to every evil Act, all that defiles the Man. And this is generally what *may* be ſaid of it, with a great deal of Juſtice. For it *is* all this, and it *does* all this in a thouſand ſeveral Inſtances. But in the Caſe of Devotion now before us, Things may be far otherwiſe managed, and the Body rendered ſo uſeful and ſerviceable to the Soul in *this* Duty, as to make Amends (as it were) for the Obſtructions it gives it in the Performance of

SERM. VII. of many *others*. Here it may be made to draw equally in the Yoke of Duty: Nay even to give *Wings* to the Mind, which it preſſeth down, and overwhelms on many other Occaſions. Nor is the Body more beholden to the *Soul*, for the *Beginning* of its Motions, than the *Soul* afterwards is to the *Body*, for the *Increaſe* of hers. But

III. *Thirdly*, We have ſtill another Way of conſidering *outward* Worſhip, as it is a *Sign*, by which we expreſs to *others* the religious Eſteem and Veneration that dwells in *us*. And we ſhall find, that from hence too we are highly obliged to the moſt ſolemn and devout *Uſe* of it. For as in the former Inſtances it has appeared to be an Inſtrument of *God*'s Honour, and our *own* particular Advantage, ſo here we ſhall find that it reaches even to the common Good of our *Neighbour* too.

And certainly great are the Advantages which the People of God, when they are met together, do mutually receive

receive from it. The *cold* and remiſs Worſhipper is, at the Sight of an exemplary Piety, kindled into ſome Degrees of holy *Warmth*; the *fervent* and devout, in the Preſence of it, becomes *yet more* enflamed. A religious Emulation riſes then in the Breaſts of the *Faithful*, an holy Strife and Deſire of excelling. He that ſees *another* compoſed in his Behaviour throughout, and fixed down to the holy Duty he is engaged in, grows aſhamed of his own Indifference and Indecencies, his ſpiritual Diſſipations and Dryneſs, and preſently ſets himſelf to imitate that amiable Pattern, and reſolves to be remarkably devout, and as much the Object of *other* Mens Imitation.

SERM. VII.

But *Believers* are not the only Perſons, that receive Benefit by it; *Unbelievers* too, tho' unwillingly, have their Share. The profane Scoffer, who dares encounter a *ſingle Chriſtian*, without Shame or Fear of Reproof, has here an Anſwer to his bold Scoffs, in that ſtill and powerful Argument, which

SERM. VII.

which arises from the Behaviour of a devout Multitude, worshipping God *in the Beauty of Holiness:* Such an Argument as will destroy all his unreasonable Suspicions, and convince him of the Sincerity of Mens Hearts towards God, by the natural unaffected Signs of it, which are shewn in his Service: Such as will put him in mind of the Numbers of devout and good Men, against which he engages; lead him on from the Thought of the present Congregation to those of the same kind that are spread over the Face of the Earth; and make him sit down and consider, whether with such a small Strength (his own, and that of a few more) he can encounter so many Thousands, even the united Wisdom and Practice of Mankind. Surely, as St. *Paul* argues in relation to the Prophesying practised in the Primitive Church, *if all thus worship, and there cometh in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all. And thus*

1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.

are

are the Secrets of his Heart made manifest; and so falling down on his Face, he will worship God, and report, that God is in you of a Truth. SERM. VII.

Thus have I *explained* the several *Grounds*, on which *external* Adoration stands, and the several good *Uses*, to which it may be employed; how much the *Honour* of God depends upon it, the Advancement of Piety in our *own* Breast, and in *that* of our Neighbour. And sure I need exhort you but *briefly* to the *Practice* of that, which appears every way so plain and so reasonable a *Duty*. Let us then lay up these Thoughts in our Hearts, *and keep our Feet* (as the Wise Man speaks) *when we go to the Sanctuary*, by a careful Reflection upon them! Let us carry in our Ears always when we enter into the Place of God's publick Worship, the Sound of those Expressions he used to *Moses* out of the flaming Bush: *Put off thy Shoes from thy Feet for the Place whereon thou standest is holy Ground!* Exod. iii. 5.

Let

SERM. VII.

Let us consider with ourselves, if such and so many are the *Advantages* that spring from a due Care of *external* Behaviour, how great must the Inconveniences then be, that arise from the Neglect of it? from an *indecent and slovenly Worship*; a Worship fit neither for *God*, who is a God of Beauty and Order, to *receive*; nor for *Man*, who is the only Creature in this lower World that has a Sense of these Things, to *pay*. Surely nothing less can follow from so *loose* a Practice, than the *Decay* of Religion in all its vital and substantial Parts; a Forgetfulness of that God, whom to have always in our Thoughts is the greatest *Preservative* against Sin that a Christian Man can have; the Derisions of the Proud towards these our solemn Meetings, and the open Scorn of every thing that is holy.

From the primitive Writers of the Story of the Church we learn, that the *first Christians*, who were so exemplary in all the Parts of Christian Duty, above

above thoſe of *latter* Times, outſtripped us in nothing more than in the *outward* Marks of Devotion and Reverence, which appeared upon them in their publick Aſſemblies. They reſorted to the Houſe of God with the ſame holy Awe and Reverence, as if they were really to meet, and to converſe with him there: They continued, during the Time of Divine Service, immoveably fixed to their Duty, without the leaſt Sign or Token of a wandering, or alienated Mind. They contented not themſelves with the *ordinary* Poſtures of Devotion, ſuch as Genuflection, the Bowing of the Head or the Body, but did (as one of the Ancients ſpeaks) proſtrate themſelves on the Pavement, cover it with their Bodies, and waſh it with Tears of devout Joy.

God grant, that if theſe Heights of Devotion be too exalted for an Age ſo degenerate as this, in which *Iniquity abounds* and *the Love of many is waxen cold*; yet, at leaſt, that *ſo much* of the

SERM. VII. Life and Spirit of *Primitive* Piety may be kept up among us, as may render our Behaviour *ſober and compoſed* in the Uſe of holy Things, and take away from wicked Men an Occaſion to blaſpheme!

Now to God the Father, &c.

External

External Worship

Shewn to be of no

EFFICACY,

Unless accompanied with

Internal Devotion.

Together with

The Excellent Contrivance of the *Church of England Service* to promote the *latter*.

External Worship not sufficient alone:

A

SERMON

Preached at

St. JAMES's Chapel,

In the YEAR 1711-12.

LAMENT. iii. 14.

Let us lift up our Hearts, with our Hands, unto God in the Heavens.

SERM. VIII.

THESE are the Words of *Jeremiah*, spoken to the *Jews* of his Time, who were very exact and punctual in the *outward* Ceremonies and Performances of Religion, but very deficient in the *inward* Life and Reality of it. They resorted to the

SERM. VIII. Temple conſtantly, and were careful to practiſe the various Rites which the Law of *Moſes* preſcribed: But they did not bring along with them a Diſpoſition of *Soul* ſuitable to thoſe Solemnities; their Mind was alienated from the Service, even while they were performing it. The Prophet, ſenſible of this great Defect in their way of Worſhip, thus exhorts them to the Cure of it. *Let us lift up our Hearts* (ſays he) *with our Hands, unto God in the Heavens.*

Which Words refer to the *Jews*, as performing the *Publick* Service of their Church in the Temple or the Synagogue; and imply, that the Devotion of the *Hand*, without that of the *Heart*, is of no Acceptance with God; that *bodily Exerciſe* (in this Senſe of the Word) *profiteth but little*, unleſs accompanied with an holy Warmth and Elevation of *Mind*.

1 Tim. iv. 8.

This is a very plain but unregarded Truth: Many *Chriſtians* there are, who ſeem not to be thoroughly convinced

vinced of it; and the best of us, God knows (such is the Infirmity of our Nature) want sometimes to be awakened into a vigorous and lively Sense of it. SERM. VIII.

Many Frequenters of such religious Assemblies as these, think their Duty sufficiently discharged by a punctual and regular Attendance upon them. If they are present during the Time of Divine Service, if they take their Share in the several Parts of it, join in the *Hymns* and the *Responses*, and add their *Amen* to the Prayers; if their *outward* Behaviour be every way decent, and agreeable to the holy Usages of the Church; tho' they are *inwardly* absent from the Duty, wherein they seem to be engaged, and their wandring Thoughts are employed all the while on foreign and vain Objects; yet shall they go away satisfied and justified in their own Conceit, as if they had performed the whole of their reasonable Service, and not offered *the Sacrifice of Fools*; — forgetting the Reproof which Eccl. v. 1.

SERM. VIII. *Esaias* first gave to the whole *Jewish* Nation, and which our Saviour applied particularly to the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*: *This People draweth nigh unto me with their Mouths, and honoureth me with their Lips; but their Heart is far from me.*

Mat. xv. 8.

That such a *Mock* Worship as this, such a mere Face and Form of Devotion, is not what God requires, what he will hearken to, or reward, give me leave briefly to shew, by observing, how unproportioned it is to the *Divine* Nature, and our *Own*, to the great *End* and *Design* of Prayer, and to those mighty *Blessings* and *Benefits*, with which, when duly performed, it is certainly attended.

The *Object* of our religious Addresses is *God*; *that God, who is a Spirit*; and who therefore will be *worshipped in Spirit* (as our Saviour argues) with all the Faculties and Powers of our Mind, with the utmost Intention and Vigour of Thought: And he therefore, who lifts up his *Hands* to him, without

John iv. 24.

any

any Elevation of his *Heart*, Affronts him, inſtead of Adoring him. *Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me bleſs his holy Name!* ſays good *David*. He ſummons every Faculty and Affection of his Soul, *all that is within him*, to do Homage to God, as knowing that the mere *Outward* Homage, unaccompanied by the *Inward*, would be a Lifeleſs and Uſeleſs Performance. What! do we hope to impoſe upon *God*, as we ſometimes do upon *Men*, by a mere *Form of Godlineſs*, without the *Power of it?* Do we think, that he requires our Adoration and Homage for his *own* Sake; and therefore contents himſelf with the Honours that are done him by *outward* Shews and Appearances? He, *who requireth Truth in the inward Parts, to whom all Things are naked and open*, and who *tryeth the very Hearts and Reins!* He, whoſe Language in holy Writ is, *My Son, give me thy Heart! Give me thy Heart*, whilſt thou art performing any Part

Pſal. ciii. 1.

Pſal. li. 6.

Heb. iv. 13.

Pſal. vii. 9.

Prov. xxiii. 26.

of

SERM. VIII. of thy Duty that relates either to *Me*, thy *ſelf* or thy *Neighbour*; but chiefly *give me thy Heart*, whilſt thou art immediately addreſſing thyſelf to me by *Prayer* and *Praiſe*; whilſt thou art actually Converſing with me, Intreating and Adoring me: *Give me thy Heart* at ſuch a Time; or elſe *all* that thou giveſt me beſides, will prove *a vain Oblation.* Again,

Let us conſider our *own* Nature as well as that of the *Divine* Being. Are we not *Reaſonable* Creatures? And ought not a *Reaſonable* Creature to pay an *entire* and *reaſonable* Service? How can *We* be ſaid to worſhip God, while the better half of us is unconcerned in the Act? It is the *Mind*, chiefly, that is the *Man*; and where the Mind therefore is abſent, the Man is not preſent: He offers not a living and a breathing Victim, but a dead and lifeleſs Carcaſs; and *with ſuch a Sacrifice how can God be well pleaſed?*

What is *Prayer*, but an Aſcent of the Mind towards God? an holy Engine,

gine, by which we lift up our Spirits to the great Father of Spirits; maintain a sweet Intercourse with him, and breath out, from the Bottom of our Hearts, our common Desires and Acknowledgments to him? And what is there of this, in *coming unto him, as his People cometh, in sitting before him as his People sitteth; in shewing much Love with our Mouth, while our Heart goeth after its Covetousness?*

SERM. VIII.

Ezek. xxxiii. 31.

Wondrous is the *Efficacy* of Prayer, as represented in Scripture; mighty Things are there said to have been done in virtue of it. But how were they done? by the mere bending of the Knees, and uttering of Words and Syllables? No! but by the Attention of the Heart, by Zeal, and Fervency. It is only *the fervent Prayer of a righteous Man*, that *availeth much:* And when *Elias*, by his prevalent Interposition with God, shut up or opened the Heavens, brought Drought or Rain upon the Earth, it is said of him,

James v. 16.

προσ- James v. 17.

SERM. VIII. προσδυχῇ προσηύξαιο, that he prayed ardently and *earnestly*.

Indeed this Qualification of *Prayer* is enjoined us by God; not only as a becoming Expression of our religious Reverence towards him; but as a proper and natural Means of working in our Souls those good Dispositions, which his blessed Spirit delights in, and delights to reward. We are directed to ask with a fixed and fervent Mind, because such a Manner of asking fits and qualifies us for receiving; makes us humble, submissive, dependent, affects us with a deep Sense of our own Insufficiency and Unworthiness, and of the Divine Bounty and Goodness; suspends the evil Motions and Desires of our Hearts for a time; and produces in us an heavenly Frame and Temper of Soul. This is the nearest and most immediate Effect of *Prayer*, which must first be obtained, in order to the obtaining of our Requests. And how therefore can he, who

who is a Stranger to the *One* of theſe, ever hope to arrive at the *Other?* SERM. VIII.

Can we imagine that Pardon of Sin, and Peace of Conſcience; the Fruits of the Spirit, and Support againſt Temptations; in a Word, the Bleſſings of this World and the next, with which God has promiſed to reward our Prayers, ſhould be purchaſed at the cheap Expence of Forms and Appearances? That thoſe Devotions which affect not *Us* firſt, ſhould affect *God* afterwards? That he ſhould attend to, or regard ſuch Requeſts, as we neither regard, nor attend to ourſelves?

Let us then not mock God, and deceive ourſelves! Let us not think we have fulfilled our Duty merely by reſorting to the Church, and adding one to the Number of the Congregation; by doing as other Men do, and ſaying as other Men ſay there; nor hope to atone by an outwardly decent Behaviour, for an inwardly alienated Mind. But let us, under a due Senſe of the preceding Reflections, whenever

we

SERM. VIII.

we come to the Houſe of God, not fail to come *whole* and entire; to *offer and preſent unto God* (as the Liturgy ſpeaks) *ourſelves, our Souls, and Bodies, to be a reaſonable, holy and lively Sacrifice to him:* let us reſolve to *worſhip* him, not with our Lips and Knees only, but (as (as we are obliged to *love* him) *even with all our Heart, and with all our Soul, and with all our Mind, and with all our Strength!*

Mark xi. 30.

God be thanked, by whoſe good Providence we are Members of a Church, where the publick Offices of Religion are ſo modelled and contrived, as to be apt, in every Part of them, to raiſe the *Attention*, and kindle an holy Flame in the *Breaſts* of all ſincere Worſhippers. I cannot better ſpend the remaining Part of my Time, than in pointing out to you the *great Advantages* which we, in this Reſpect, enjoy, and by that Means ſhewing you, how *inexcuſable* we are, if we neglect to improve them, *more inexcuſable* than the Members of any other Church, or Commu-

Communion in the Christian World. For,

1. The *Language*, wherein our Service is performed, cannot but be of use to fix and keep alive our *Attention*. 'Tis our own Mother Tongue, what all of us are acquainted with; and can therefore listen to with Ease and Delight, because we understand it. There *is* a Church, whose publick Prayers are put up in a Language unknown to the greatest Part of those who are to join in them. But how can the Heart be affected by the mere *Sound* of Words, while it is utterly a Stranger to their *Meaning*? The publick Devotions therefore of an unlettered *Papist*, must needs be one continued Scene of Distractions and Wanderings, from the Beginning to the End of them.

Nor are our Offices drawn up only in our *own* Tongue, but in the most easy and plain Parts of it, which lie open to *Christians* of the meanest Capacities and Attainments. There is nothing fantastical in the Expression of them,

SERM. VIII. them, no vain Uſe of ſuch hard Phraſes of Scripture, as tend rather to amuſe and puzzle, than to inſtruct common Hearers; nothing which approaches to that myſterious, unintelligible Way of Speaking, in which ſome either deceiving, or deceived Chriſtians delight; nothing that ſavours of Singularity, Hypocriſy, or Enthuſiaſm. Whatever we meet with there, is plain, ſimple, natural; and yet at the ſame time ſolemn, majeſtick, moving; ſignificant and full, ſound and wholeſome: It carries both Light and Heat in it, and is fitted equally to inform the Underſtandings and inflame the Affections of the wiſeſt and weakeſt of *Chriſtians*. I need not ſay how far this Excellence of our Service contributes to rouſe and inſpirit the Attention of thoſe who partake of it; *eſpecially*, if it be conſidered,

2. That theſe Prayers and Praiſes are offered up in a *premeditated* Form of Words, with which every one is before acquainted: For *this* alſo I muſt reckon

reckon among the peculiar Advantages of our Way of Worship, towards fastening down the Minds of Men to that holy Duty, wherein they are engaged. I grant, indeed, that *Unpremeditated* Prayers, uttered with great Fluency, with a devout Warmth and Earnestness, are apt to make strong and awakening Impressions on the Minds of the Generality of Hearers. But it may be doubted, whether the Attention *thus* raised, be *that* which we are now recommending; whether it be not an Attention rather of Curiosity and Surprize, than of a real Piety and sound Devotion. For a good and conscientious Man, who is to join in a Prayer, with which he was before unacquainted, must needs do it with some little Diffidence and Fear, lest there should be any Thing in the *Matter* or *Manner* of that Prayer, improper and unbecoming: He must suspend his Assent to those *unknown* Requests, 'till he has so far considered them, as to be sure that they are fit for him to agree in.

SERM. VIII.

SERM. VIII. And while he is thus employing his Thoughts on *one* Petition or Sentence, another ſucceeds, which will require a like Degree of Suſpence and Deliberation: And this cannot but check his Devotion, by dividing and breaking the Force of his Mind. Whereas he, who offers up his Requeſts to God in a known and ſtated Form, has no Avocations of this Kind to ſtruggle with; and can therefore apply himſelf directly and vigorouſly to his holy Taſk, and *ask in Faith, nothing doubting.* He fears not, leſt unfitting Requeſts ſhould be made, or fit ones clothed in unſuitable Language; and is therefore at Leiſure to excite all the Powers and Affections of his Soul, and to engage them in that ſpiritual Service. This, I ſay, is a peculiar Advantage, which attends the Uſe of precompoſed Prayers; and if there be many, who do not find and feel this Effect of them, it is not, I am perſuaded, the Fault of *ſet Forms*, but *their own:* They want Attention and Fervency in *this* Way of Worſhip; and

James i. 6.

and they would want it *equally*, perhaps *much more* in any *other*.

3. It is yet a farther great Advantage which we of this Communion enjoy, that our Service is not one continued Act of Devotion, but is interrupted by many little Breaks and Pauſes, and conſiſts of ſeveral diſtinct and entire Forms of Petition and Praiſe; by which Means the Mind is eaſed and relieved from too long and ſtrict an Attention; retires a little, and returns, as it were, with new Strength to its Duty. The *Collects* of our Liturgy are ſo *ſhort*, that a devout *Chriſtian* may, even whilſt he is pronouncing his *Amen* at the *cloſe*, by a ſudden Glance of Thought, recollect every Branch of them; and ſo contract into that ſingle Word the whole Force of the preceding Prayer. Nay, the very Frame and Contrivance of theſe *Collects*, is highly uſeful to raiſe and to enliven our Devotions, inaſmuch as they generally begin with the awful Mention of ſome of God's Attributes, and always end with re-

SERM. VIII.

minding us of the Blood and Interceſſion of *Jeſus*. And what Conſiderations in Religion are there more operative and more awakening than *theſe*, which return ſo often upon our Minds, during the Courſe of our excellent Service?

4. *Which* contributes alſo to render us attent and devout, by that uſeful and affecting *Variety*, with which it abounds. There is in it a *Variety* of all Sorts of religious Duty, in which a Creature can apply itſelf to its Creator. *There* we confeſs our Sins, and intercede with God for the Pardon of them: *There* we deprecate the divine *Judgments* that may be inflicted, and pray for all the *Bleſſings* (Spiritual and Temporal) that can be beſtowed on ourſelves, or others; and there we put up our *Praiſes* and *Thankſgivings* to God for all the Inſtances of his Mercy and Goodneſs towards us. *There* we hear the holy Scriptures read, and profeſs our Belief of the great Articles of Faith: And theſe different Parts of divine

divine Worſhip are ſo happily inter-mixed, and ſucceed each other in ſo beautiful an Order, that the Mind of the Worſhipper has always a new and pleaſing Employment. SERM. VIII.

As the Prieſt has his Share in the Performance of theſe Offices, ſo the *People* too have theirs; and in a much larger Proportion, than belongs to them in any other Chriſtian Aſſemblies. *Each* is employed in ſtirring up the *other* into an holy and affectionate Emulation of Heart and Voice; and they do therefore *mutually* provoke and kindle each others Devotion.

5. I add alſo (in the *laſt* Place) that the Service of our Sanctuary is particularly contrived to promote Attention by the *decent*, *orderly*, and *ſolemn Manner*, in which it is performed. For it is neither on the one Side ſo very plain and ſimple, as not to be able to rouſe; nor on the other ſo ſplendid and gawdy, as to be apt to diſtract the Mind. It is duly tempered between theſe *Extremes*, and partakes of either, as far

SERM. VIII. as either is requiſite towards creating and cheriſhing a ſound and reaſonable, a warm and active Devotion. Pictures indeed, and Images, to which the Church of *Rome* in this Caſe has recourſe, fix the Attention; but it is on a wrong *Object*. A Multitude of vain and pompous Ceremonies, a Variety of rich Habits and Ornaments, Muſick framed for Delight, without Improvement: Theſe Things indeed may render an Aſſembly attent; but ſo likewiſe would a Scene in the Theatre. The Devotion they produce (if indeed they produce any) goes no farther than the Senſes; it is not that of the Heart and Spirit. But with us, all the *outſide* of our Worſhip contributes towards the *inward* Life and Reality of it: Our Churches are decently adorned; they who officiate at our Altars, are decently habited; our daily Service is performed, and our Sacraments adminiſtred in a becoming and reverend Manner; our Muſick is always, or always ought to be, grave and ſolemn. Every Part

and

and Circumstance of our Worship is so ordered, as to inspire us with an holy Reverence and Awe, and so far to keep the outward Senses awake, as their Vigilance may be of use to give Wings to our Devotion, and Vigour to our Minds.

Since therefore we have so many signal Helps and Advantages towards worshipping God in his Sanctuary with an heavenly Frame and Temper of Soul, let us resolve from this Moment to make a due Use of them; to repair often to the House of God with holy Reverence and Awe, and *to lift up our Hearts, together with our Hands*, whenever we thus approach him, *in the Beauty of Holiness.*

Which that we may all of us do, God of his infinite Mercy grant, &c.

THE USEFULNESS OF CHURCH MUSICK.

The Usefulness of Church Musick:

A

SERMON

Preached on

St. CECILIA's Day,

In the YEAR 1698.

PSAL. lvii. 7, 8.

My Heart is fixed, O God, my Heart is fixed; I will sing, and give Praise. Awake up, my Glory! awake Psaltery, and Harp! I myself will awake right early.

SERM. IX.

IT is the *Man after God's Heart*, whose Words these are; and in them he points out to us one of the chief Methods, by which he became so:

Even

SERM. IX.

Even by preparing and qualifying his *own* Heart in the best Manner that he could, for the Duties of the Sanctuary; and by endeavouring, when he assisted at those Solemnities, to perform them with the utmost Attention, Alacrity, and holy Warmth of Mind, of which he was capable.

He enters not on the divine Praises, 'till he finds himself in such a Posture, and under such a Composure of Mind, as suits with that holy Employment: *My Heart is fixed*, says he, *O God, my Heart is fixed:* Then, and then only, it is Time for him to go on, and say, *I will sing, and give Praise.* And that he may be sure to preserve, to feed, and to improve the good Disposition he is in, he calls to his Aid those excellent Helps to Devotion, which he had so often tried with so good Success; *Vocal* and *Instrumental Musick: Awake up, my Glory*, says he, *awake Psaltery and Harp!* By his *Glory* he means his *Tongue*, the most noble Organ of the Body of Man, especially when

when employed in celebrating the Praise and Glory of God. By *Psaltery and Harp* (which alone are mentioned) we must understand all the several Instruments of Musick, which were, by his Appointment, brought into the Temple-worship: And with these Assistances, these Encouragements, he ventures now to undertake for himself, that he will maintain that lively Erection of Mind, with which he enters on the divine Service, throughout the whole Course of it; that he will rouze up every Faculty, Affection, and Power of his Soul, and keep them fixed to the holy Work they are about, without Distraction or Wandring: *I myself will awake*, says he. And when he adds to all this, that he will do it *right early*, he intimates to us the particular Time, at which such Resolutions as these are best executed; 'tis in the *Morning*, the Season of Devotion, when the Mind is fresh and vigorous, untired with the Business of the Day, and untainted with ill Images and Impressions.

This

SERM. IX.

This I take to be the full Import of those Words of the devout *Psalmist*, which I have read to you; and which, I think, I may now not improperly discourse on under these Propositions: By shewing you,

I. *First*, That the great Thing which recommends our publick Devotions to God, is, our performing them, with an awakened, fixed, and lively Attention of the Mind. That therefore,

II. *Secondly*, All the pious Helps and Expedients, that conduce to this End, are to be laid hold of; particularly those which the Text points out to us, the Use of *vocal* and *instrumental* Harmony.

III. *Thirdly*, That the *Way* of performing divine Service *in the Church of England*, is better fitted to promote this good End [the fixing our Attention, and enflaming our Affections] than any *other* publick Form of Devotions

votions now practised *in the Christian World:* That it enjoys this Advantage, as in several *other* Respects, so particularly in relation to a solemn and decent Use of *Church Musick.* SERM. IX.

Which *Three* Points being made out, I shall close with a *Fourth*; wherein I shall briefly, but earnestly exhort you, to make your Devotion *exemplary*, in Proportion to those Advantages, which you above all others enjoy. IV.

First, I am to shew you, that the great Thing which recommends our publick Devotions to God, is, our performing them with an awakened, fixed, and lively Attention of Mind. I.

Our Worship is composed, as we ourselves are, of a *Body*, and a *Soul:* the *Body* is the outward ceremonious Part; the Devotion of the Lips, of the Hands, and of the Knees, all that lies open to the Sense and Observation of others; but the *Life and Soul* of the Duty consists in those inward Acts of

SERM. IX. of Adoration and Love, Intercession and Thanksgiving, Submission and Trust, whereof *God*, and *we* ourselves only are conscious. This *unseen* Homage is that, which animates and sanctifies what is *visible*; and without this, all the *outward* Shew, and Form of Devotion, is of no Acceptance, no Value; a lifeless and an useless Performance.

Indeed under the *Jewish* Dispensation a Regard was had to the mere *Externals* of Religion: From a gross and carnal People tied down to earthly Expectations and sensible Objects, God was pleased, in some measure, to accept a gross and carnal Service, and to hinder them by that Means, from falling into downright *Idolatry*, a mighty Propension to which they had contracted during their Stay in *Egypt*. They were to be distinguished and kept separate from all other Nations, by a peculiar Body of Rites and Ceremonies; and these Rites and Ceremonies therefore being useful to this End, derived some Value also from it; especially, being

being all of them such, as had a typical Reference to more vital and substantial Duties, and were *Shadows* and Emblems *of good Things to come:* The Virtue of which, they, by the divine Appointment, did not only represent, but impart also to such as performed them. But this typical State being at an end, a more pure and perfect Institution succeeded; a more refined and spiritual Worship was set up, in which the Mind *is* all, and *does* all; and in which *outward* Observances have no otherwise a Place, than as they serve, either to testify the *inward* Affections of our Hearts to *others*, or to excite and improve them in *ourselves*. A Worship every way proportioned to the Nature of *God*, who is to *receive* it; and to the Nature of *Man*, who is to *pay* it; and to the *End* and *Use* also of such religious Duties, which is, not merely to express our Homage to God, or to procure a Return from him; but also to work in our Minds all those good Dispositions and Graces, which

SERM. IX.

SERM. IX. we are so earnest to obtain; and to be at once a necessary *Condition*, and a proper and natural Means also of spiritual Improvement. And this is remarkably the Case of *such* Prayers as are put up with Application of Mind, with Zeal and Fervency: Our very asking in such a *manner* fits and qualifies us for receiving; makes us resigned, submissive, dependent; affects us with a deep Sense of our own Insufficiency and Unworthiness, and of the divine Bounty and Goodness; suspends the evil Motions and Desires of our Hearts for a Time, and puts us every Way into that holy and humble Frame of Mind, which God delights in, and delights to reward.

A great deal more might be said, to shew, how requisite it is, to approach God in his Worship, with an awakened, fixed, and lively Attention of Soul; if either *this* were a *Point*, which any good and pious Man doubted of, or were intended to be dwelt on in this Discourse any farther, than as it leads the

the Way to *thoſe* which follow. The next of which is,

SERM. IX.

Secondly, That therefore all ſuch pious Helps and Expedients as conduce to this great End, are to be laid hold of; particularly thoſe which the Text points out to us, *Vocal* and *Inſtrumental* Harmony. The Uſe of *theſe* in Divine Service, I ſhall now recommend and juſtify, from this Conſideration: That they do, when wiſely employed and managed, contribute extremely to awaken the Attention, and enliven the Devotion of all ſerious and ſincere *Chriſtians*. II.

And their Uſefulneſs to this End will appear on a double Account, both as they remove the ordinary *Hinderances* of Devotion, and as they ſupply us further with ſpecial *Helps and Advantages* towards quickening and improving it.

By the melodious Harmony of the Church, the ordinary *Hinderances* of Devotion are removed, particularly theſe

SERM. IX. *three:* That *Engagement* of Thought, which we often bring with us into the Church from what we last conversed with; those *accidental Distractions*, that may happen to us during the Course of Divine Service; and that *Weariness* and *Flatness* of Mind, which some *weak* Tempers may labour under, by reason even of the *Length* of it.

When we come into the Sanctuary immediately from any worldly Affair (as our very Condition of Life does, alas! force many of us to do) we come usually with divided and alienated Minds. The Business, the Pleasure, or the Amusement we left, sticks fast to us; and perhaps engrosses that Heart for a Time, which should then be taken up altogether in spiritual Addresses. But as soon as the Sound of the sacred Hymns strike us, all that busy Swarm of Thoughts presently disperses: By a grateful Violence we are forced into the Duty that is going forward, and, as indevout and backward as we were before,

before, find ourſelves on the ſudden ſeized with a ſacred Warmth, and ready to cry out with holy *David*; *my Heart is fixed, O God, my Heart is fixed! I will ſing, and give Praiſe.* Our Miſapplication of Mind, at ſuch Times, is often ſo great, and we ſo deeply immerſed in it, that there needs ſome very ſtrong and powerful Charm to rouſe us from it; and perhaps nothing is of greater Force to this Purpoſe, than the ſolemn and awakening Airs of *Church Muſick.*

For the ſame Reaſon, thoſe *accidental Diſtractions* that may happen to us, during the Courſe of the Service, are alſo beſt cured by it. The *ſtrongeſt* Minds, and beſt practiſed in holy Duties, may ſometimes be ſurprized into a Forgetfulneſs of what they are about, by ſome violent outward Impreſſions; and every ſlight Occaſion will ſerve to call off the Thoughts of no leſs willing, though much *weaker* Worſhippers. Thoſe that come to *ſee*, and to be *ſeen* here, will often gain

SERM. IX.

their Point, will draw and detain for a while the Eyes of the Curious, or the Unwary. A *Passage* in the sacred Story read, an Expression used in the common Forms of Devotion, shall raise a *foreign* Reflection perhaps in musing and speculative Minds, and lead them on from Thought to Thought, and Point to Point, till they are bewildered in their own Imagination. *These*, and an Hundred *other* Avocations will arise, and prevail; but when the *Instruments* of Praise begin to sound, our *scattered* Thoughts presently take the Alarm, return to their Post, and to their Duty, preparing and arming themselves against their spiritual *Assailants*.

Lastly, Even the *Length* of the Service itself becomes an *Hinderance* sometimes to the Devotion, which it was meant to feed and raise: For, alas! we quickly tire in the Performance of holy Duties; and as eager and unwearied as we are in attending upon *secular* Business, and trifling Concerns,

cerns, yet in *divine* Offices, I fear, the Expoſtulation of our Saviour is applicable to moſt of us: *What! can ye not watch with me one Hour? This Infirmity* is relieved, this *Hindrance* prevented or removed, by the ſweet *Harmony* that accompanies ſeveral Parts of the Service, and returning upon us at fit *Intervals*, keeps our Attention up to the Duty, when we begin to flag, and makes us inſenſible of the *Length* of it. Happily therefore, and wiſely is it ſo ordered, that the Morning Devotions of the Church, which are much the longeſt, ſhould ſhare alſo a greater Proportion of the *Harmony* which is ſo *uſeful* to enliven them.

But its *Uſe* ſtops not here, at a bare Removal of ſome of the ordinary *Impediments* to Devotion; it ſupplies us alſo with ſpecial *Helps* and *Advantages* towards furthering and improving it. For it adds *Dignity* and *Solemnity* to the publick Worſhip; it ſweetly influences and raiſes our *Paſſions*, while we aſſiſt at it; and makes us do our Duty

SERM. IX.

with the greatest *Pleasure* and *Chearfulness*; all which are very proper and powerful Means, towards creating in us that holy Attention and Erection of Mind, which I have shewn to be the most reasonable Part of this our reasonable Service.

Such is our Nature, that even the best Things, and most worthy of our Esteem, do not always employ and detain our Thoughts, in Proportion to their real Value, unless they be set off and greatened by some outward Circumstances, which are fitted to raise Admiration and Surprize in the Breasts of those who hear, or behold them. And this good Effect is wrought in us by the Power of *Sacred Musick*. To *it* we, in good Measure, owe the Dignity and Solemnity of our *publick Worship*; which else, I fear, in its *natural* Simplicity and Plainness, would not so strongly strike, or so deeply affect the Minds, as it ought to do, of the Sluggish and Inattentive, that is, of the far greatest Part of Mankind. But when

Voices

Voices and *Inſtruments* are ſkilfully adapted to it, it appears to us in a majeſtick Air and Shape, and gives us very awful and reverent Impreſſions; which, while they are upon us, it is impoſſible for us not to be fixed and compoſed to the utmoſt. We are then in the ſame State of Mind, that the devout Patriarch was, when he awoke from his holy Dream; and ready with him to ſay to ourſelves: *Surely the Lord is in this Place, and I knew it not. How dreadful is this Place! This is none other but the Houſe of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven.* Gen. xxviii. 17.

Further; the *Availableneſs* of Harmony to promote a pious Diſpoſition of Mind will appear, from the great Influence it naturally has on the *Paſſions*, which, when well directed and rightly applied, are the Wings and Sails of the Mind, that ſpeed its Paſſage to Perfection, and are of particular and remarkable Uſe in the Offices of *Devotion:* For *Devotion* conſiſts in an Aſcent of the Mind towards *God*, attended

SERM. IX. attended with holy Breathings of Soul, and a divine Exercise of all the *Passions* and *Powers* of the Mind. These *Passions* the Melody of Sounds serves only to guide and elevate towards their proper Object: *These* it *first* calls forth, and encourages, and *then* gradually raises and inflames. This it does to *all* of them, as the *Matter* of the Hymns sung gives an Occasion for the employing them; but the Power of it is chiefly seen in advancing that most heavenly Passion of *Love*, which reigns always in *pious* Breasts, and is the surest and most inseparable Mark of true Devotion; which recommends what we do in Virtue of it to *God*, and makes it relishing to *ourselves*; and without which, all our spiritual Offerings, our Prayers and our Praises, are both insipid and unacceptable. At this our Religion *begins*, and at this it *ends*; it is the sweetest Companion and Improvement of it here upon *Earth*, and the very Earnest and Foretaste of *Heaven*: Of the Pleasures of which nothing

thing further is revealed to us, than that they conſiſt in the Practice of *Holy Muſick*, and *Holy Love*; the joint Enjoyment of *which* (we are told) is to be the happy Lot of all pious Souls to endleſs Ages. And obſervable therefore it is, that *that Apoſtle*, in whoſe Breaſt this divine Quality ſeems moſt to have abounded, has alſo ſpoken the moſt advantageouſly of *Vocal* and *Inſtrumental* Harmony, and afforded us the beſt Argument for the lawful Uſe of it: For ſuch I account the Deſcription which he has given us of the Devotions of Angels and bleſſed Spirits, performed by *Harps* and *Hymns* in the *Apocalypſe*. A Deſcription which, whether real or metaphorical, yet, belonging to the Evangelical State, certainly implies thus much, that whatever is there ſaid to be made uſe of, may now, under the Goſpel be warrantably and laudably employed.

And in his Steps trod the holy Martyr *Ignatius*, who probably ſaw Saint *John* in the Fleſh, and learnt that

Leſſon

SERM. IX.

Lesson of divine Love from him, which after his Example, he inculcated every where in his *Epistles*; and together with it instils into the Churches he writes to, a Love of *Holy Harmony*, by frequent Allusions and Comparisons drawn from that Science, which recur oftner in his Writings, than in those of any other Ancient whatever, and seem to intimate to us, that the Devotions of the Church were set off with some kind of *Melody*, even in those *early* Times, notwithstanding we usually place the Rise of the Institution much lower.

Would we then have *Love* at these Assemblies? Would we have our Spirit softened and enlarged, and made fit for the Illapses of the Divine Spirit? Let us, as often as we can, call in to our Aid the Assistances of *Musick*, to work us up into this *heavenly* Temper. All Selfishness and Narrowness of Mind, all Rancor and Peevishness vanish from the Heart, where the Love of *Divine Harmony* dwells; *as the evil Spirit of*

1 Sam. xvi. 23.

Saul

Saul retired before the *Harp of David.* The *Devotional*, as well as the *Active* Part of Religion is, (we know) founded in *good Nature*; and one of the best Signs and Causes of good Nature is, I am sure, to delight in such *pious* Entertainments.

And now it naturally follows from hence (which was the *last Advantage*, from whence I proposed to recommend the Use of *Church Musick)* that it makes our *Duty* a *Pleasure*, and enables us, by that Means, to perform it, with the utmost Vigour and Chearfulness. It is certain, that the more pleasing an Action is to us, the more keenly and eagerly are we used to employ ourselves in it, the less liable are we, while it is going forward, to tire, and droop, and be dispirited. So that whatever contributes to make our Devotion *taking* (within such a Degree as not at the same time to dissipate and distract it) does, for that very Reason, contribute to our Attention and holy Warmth of Mind in performing it.

What

SERM. IX.

What we take Delight in, we no longer look upon as a Task, but return to always with Desire, dwell upon with Satisfaction, and quit with Uneasiness. And this it was which made holy *David* express himself in so pathetical a Manner concerning the Service of the *Sanctuary: As the Hart panteth after the Water-Brooks* (says he) *so panteth my Soul after thee, O God. My Soul is athirst for God, yea even for the living God. When, O when shall I come to appear before the Presence of God?* Which passionate Wish, as it certainly proceeded from the *Pleasure* he took in reflecting on those holy *Offices*, so, I question not, but a good Part of that Pleasure arose from the sacred *Melody* which accompanied them. For so he himself instructs us to think of him in many other Passages of the *Psalms*; particularly where he breaks out into this pious Exultation: *It is well seen, O my God, how thou goest, how thou my God and King goest in the Sanctuary: The Singers go before, the*

Psal. xlii. 1, 2.

Psal. lxviii. 24, 25.

the Minſtrels follow after; in the Midſt are the Damſels playing with the Timbrels. And if the Image of that *holy Quire*, now only preſent to his *Memory*, gave him ſo much Pleaſure, what Tranſports do we think he was under, when he himſelf *aſſiſted* at the Service, and his Ears drank in their holy Strains?

And the ſame may we obſerve to be the Caſe, as to ſome of the *Fathers* of the firſt Rank, St. *Chryſoſtom*, St. *Auſtin*, and St. *Baſil:* As *Eloquent* as they naturally were, yet they never appear *ſo* Eloquent, never put on ſuch a Variety of Thought and Expreſſion, ſuch an Elevation of Soul and Style, as when they are diſcourſing of the Energy and Power of *Church Muſick.* Could I produce to you the Paſſages from them to this Purpoſe at length, you would ſay, that Men who ſpake thus feelingly, and with ſo much Extacy, of the holy Hymns and Anthems of the Church, when they were at a *Diſtance* from them, muſt have an Heaven almoſt

SERM. IX.

most in their Breasts, when they *partook* of them. If *therefore* the Praises of God, tunefully performed, be naturally attended with an holy *Pleasure*, that Pleasure, I say, must needs produce *Attention*; actuate all the Springs, and enliven all the Motions of Devout and Heavenly, nay even of Earthly, and Sluggish Minds. The Ancients do sometimes use the Metaphor of an *Army*, when they are speaking of the *joint* Devotions put up to God in the Assembly of his Saints: They say, we there meet together in *Troops* to do Violence to *Heaven*; that we encompass, we besiege the *Throne* of God, and bring such an united Force, as is not to be withstood. And, I suppose, we may as innocently carry on the Metaphor, as they have begun it, and say, that *Church Musick*, when decently ordered, may have as great Uses in *this Army of Supplicants*, as the Sound of the *Trumpet* has among the *Hosts of the mighty Men!* It equally rouses the Courage, equally gives Life, and Vigour,

Vigour, and Reſolution, and Unanimity to theſe *holy Aſſailants.* SERM. IX.

Thus have I ſhewn you, in how many ſeveral Reſpects *Vocal* and *Inſtrumental Harmony* may be ſerviceable to *awaken*, *fix*, and *inflame* us in our publick Addreſſes to God; and how far therefore it recommends itſelf to the Approbation and Uſe of all pious *Chriſtians*, upon this ſingle Conſideration: So that, though the Worſhip now under the Goſpel be *Spiritual*, yet are we not debarred, on that Account, from employing *ſeveral Means* and *Inſtruments* of Worſhip, which are *not* ſo. On the contrary, from the *Spiritual Nature* of our Worſhip, it follows, that all ſuch *outward* Helps and Expedients may and ought to be laid hold of, as do really aſſiſt and promote the *inward* Worſhip of our Spirits. And for this Reaſon therefore, among others, the melodious Harmony now practiſed in *our* Church ought to be continued.

SERM. IX.

'Till then our Brethren of the *Separation* can prove, either that *Musick* has not that *Influence* on the Mind of Man, as it has been represented to have; or that the Minds of *us Christians* are not so disposed to receive its Impressions, as those of *other* Men; that we have not the *same* Faculties to be wrought upon, the *same* Passions to be regulated, the *same* Dulness and Distraction of Mind to be cured; 'till this can be made out by *them*, they must allow us to retain those *Modes* of Worship, which *We* and our *Forefathers*, from the Infancy of the *Reformation* down to this Day, have practised, to our great Spiritual Comfort: *Modes* of Worship, which *They* perhaps, who stand aloof from them, may think (and call sometimes) *Rudiments of the Law, and weak and beggarly Elements*; but which *We*, by Experience, find and feel to be very strong and powerful *Incentives to Godliness*.

Gal. iv. 9. If *Abuses* now and then creep into *this* Part of our Worship, *They* shall not

not be more ready to point them out, than *We* will be to own and reform them. If some slight *Inconveniences* may happen to have arisen from hence, which seem to blemish the Performance of our Religious Service, far be it from us either to cherish, or defend them. The very best Things are liable to be misused; and the better the Thing, oftentimes the more liable it is to it. However we doubt not, but that, upon a fair Balance of Profit and Loss, it will appear, that the few *Inconveniencies pretended* to have arisen from hence, are not to be compared with the many and mighty *Advantages*, that have certainly sprung from it; and that if *one* good Man has been thrown *back* in his Devotions, *Hundreds and Thousands* have been extremely *forwarded* by it.

SERM. IX.

And this is what I should now more particularly endeavour to prove under my

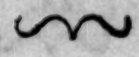
Third general Head, wherein I proposed to shew, that the *Way* of performing III.

SERM. IX. forming divine Service in the *Church of England* is better fitted to fix our *Attentions*, and raise our *Affections*, than any *other* Form of Devotions now practised in the *Christian World* *: That it enjoys this Advantage, as in several other Respects, so particularly in relation to a solemn and decent Use of *Church Musick*. But the greatest Part of the Matter that would arise on this Head, is foreign to the Design of the Day; and what is not so, has in Part been prevented already; and neither of them can now be insisted upon, without depriving you too long of a better and more sensible Conviction of the Power of Church Musick, than any I can supply you with. I shall therefore take this whole Point for granted; and from thence, in the

IV. *Fourth* and last Place, very briefly, but earnestly exhort you to make your Devotion *Exemplary* in Proportion to

* See the preceding Discourse on this Subject.

those



thoſe *Advantages*, which *you* above all *others* enjoy. In vain will it be for us to boaſt, that we have extraordinary Helps to inward Piety, if our outward Behaviour plainly declares, that we do not make a due Uſe of them. In vain ſhall we hope to convice thoſe that *differ* from us, of the Decency and Expedience of *this* Part of our Worſhip, and of its great Tendency to ſpiritual Edification; if they ſee that it does not really produce thoſe good Effects in us which we aſcribe to it: Let us reaſon never ſo well in this Caſe, they will think they have anſwered our *Arguments*, if they can but confront them with our *Practices*. Let us take away the Strength of *this* Objection, as well as we can that of all the *reſt*; and then, I am ſure, our Devotions will be altogether blameleſs. O let all of us, that have any regard for the Honour of that Church, to which we belong, any Zeal for the true Intereſts of Piety, any real Concern of Heart on the Account of

SERM. IX. those little Niceties, and endless Scruples that thus unhappily divide us; O let all of us, I say, that are thus affected and disposed (as all of us, I am sure, *should* be) resolve, from this Moment, so to order our external Deportment in the House of God, as may best enable it to reach those excellent Ends! Let no light and vain *Motions*, no loose and unseemly *Gestures* be seen upon any of us, when we appear in this great Presence! Let our Ears then listen to nothing, but to the solemn Offerings of Prayer and Praise that are then put up, and listen to them with no other Design, but to affect our Souls with a deep Sense of them. Let not our *Eyes* lead the Way to our naughty *Hearts*, and teach them to wander! But let us be all composed throughout into Attention, and awed into a religious Respect and Silence.

To the Sound of *Words*, and the Significancy of *Gestures*, let us join all along the sweet Melody of our *Hearts*; compleating the holy *Consort*, we assist

at

at, by a divine *Agreement of Mind* and *Body* in the same Acts of Adoration, and by making *all* our Worship both *inward* and *outward* exactly *harmonious*, and of a Piece! So shall we take away every Reproach that shall be cast upon our Communion: So shall we win the Hearts, and convince the Judgments of those that differ from us: So shall we thoroughly recommend our *Worship* to God, and *ourselves* by the Means of it. In a Word, so shall we make the Devotions of this our Church *Militant* here on *Earth*, the lively Image of those of the Church *Triumphant* in *Heaven*.

SERM. IX.

To a blessed Participation of which, may God of his infinite Mercy bring us, &c.

THE

SIN and FOLLY

Of being Anxious about

FUTURE EVENTS.

Of Anxiety and Solicitude.

A

SERMON

Preached at

WESTMINSTER Abby,

March 13, 1714-15.

MATT. vi. 34.

—*Take no Thought for the Morrow.*

SERM. X.

THIS is Part of our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount; wherein he proposed a short Sum of *Christian* Doctrine, in Opposition to the false Maxims, and corrupt Notions of *Morality*, that then obtained in the World. And

SERM. X.

And indeed, all the Precepts he there laid down, though highly reaſonable in themſelves, were yet ſo diſtant from the common Opinions and Practice of the *Jews*, that we are not to wonder, if (as St. *Matthew* informs us) *when he had ended theſe Sayings, the Multitude was aſtoniſhed at his Doctrine:* For they had heard nothing *like* it from their Teachers, the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*. And, perhaps, no one Branch of it was more ſurprizing to that worldly minded People, immerſed deeply in the Cares of Life, and in a reſtleſs Concern for Earthly Things, than the Rule given by him in the Text.— *Take no Thought for the Morrow.* A Rule, which even to *Chriſtian* Ears may ſeem ſomewhat harſh at firſt Hearing; and will therefore deſerve to be a little *explained*, in order to its becoming a ſure Foundation of *Duty*, and the proper Subject of thoſe *Reaſonings* and *Exhortations*, with which I propoſe to enforce it.

Matt. vii. 28.

—*Take*

SERM. X.

—*Take no Thought for the Morrow.*

The Meaning of our Saviour in these Words, cannot be, that we are to live at Random, secure and careless of whatever may befall us; that we are not to look into the Consequences of our own, or other Men's Actions, nor endeavour any ways to foresee, and prevent approaching Dangers: That we are to make no manner of Provision for future Events, to lay up nothing, and concern ourselves about nothing, but what is present, and immediately before us: For this is no Part of the Character either of a *Wise* or *Good* Man, nor agreeable to many *other* Rules and Directions given us in holy Scripture. Doubtless, Sagacity in discerning, and a prudent Forecast towards declining Evils, are not only allowable, but commendable Qualities: Frugality and Diligence are certainly Virtues: And therefore the *prudent Man* is thus described by *Solomon*, that *he foreseeth the Evil, and hideth himself*: Prov. xxii. 3.

SERM. X. *himself:* And the Ant is recommended to us, as a Pattern of Providence and Parsimony; *Go to the Ant, thou sluggard, consider her Ways, and be wise.* Even our Saviour had a *Bag*, wherein there was probably a Supply for more than *one* Day. And as he allows us to foresee Persecutions at a Distance, and to escape them by an early Flight; so he himself took that Method of declining them, and cannot therefore be supposed to condemn what he frequently practised. But his Meaning plainly is, to forbid *such* a Care and Concern for future Accidents, as is attended with *Uneasiness*, *Distrust*, and *Despondency*; *such* a Degree of *Thoughtfulness*, as takes up, and dejects, and distracts the Mind. We are not too curiously to pry into the remote Issues of Things, nor to perplex and afflict ourselves with the Forethought of imagined Dangers: We are not to guard against Want, by an eager anxious Pursuit of Wealth, nor be so careful in providing Supplies for the Necessities of

Prov. vi. 6

of *this* Life, as to forget that we are designed for *another*. In *this* Sense we are obliged *to take no Thought for the Morrow*. And indeed this is the Sense which the *Original* naturally carries: For what our Version renders by *taking Thought*, is in the *Greek*, a Word of much greater Force and Compass, signifying a restless Solicitude, and Distraction of Thought; and by the *Morrow*, is not meant the *very next* Day only, but, according to the Import of the *Eastern* Phrase, *all* the Time to come, *any* future Event, at what Distance soever. The Design of the Text therefore is, to prohibit all anxious and perplexing Cares; whether as to the good Things of Life, the Necessaries and first Conveniencies of it, how we shall be furnished with them; or, whether as to the *ill* Things, the possible *Dangers*, and distant *Evils* of Life, how we shall bear them: A Disease very incident to good and virtuous Minds, when they happen to be a little tinctured with Melancholy; and

very

SERM. X.

very apt, where it gets Poſſeſſion, to poiſon all the Enjoyments of Life, and even to make Life itſelf ſometimes a Burthen to the Owner. It has been known, when an exceſſive Love of ſome earthly Good [as perhaps of a near and dear *Relation* or *Friend*] has in tender Tempers raiſed ſuch a Dread of loſing that Happineſs, as hath been more than equal to the Pleaſure they took in enjoying it. And there have been Inſtances of thoſe, who, under all the Affluence and Plenty in the World, have fancied to themſelves ſome Accident, that might rob them at once of all they poſſeſſed; and have by ſuch an *imaginary* Scene made themſelves as truly miſerable, as if it were *real*. Nor is it an unuſual Thing for Men to be influenced ſo far, by Reflections on ſuch *poſſible* Accidents as theſe, as to ſhut up their Hands and their Bowels to the Poor, and to think themſelves excuſed from relieving other Men's Wants, leſt they themſelves ſhould one Day want what they

are

are invited to beſtow. However, ſhould *ſome* of theſe be thought *rare* Caſes, yet nothing is more *common*, than to ſee Men, who are at Eaſe, diſquieting themſelves with remote Proſpects, and with the vain Fear of future Evils: Eſpecially if they live in doubtful and diſtracted Times, when the Spirit of Diſſenſion reigns openly, and Parties of Men are loud and violent againſt each other: Then they ſink under the ſad View of Things, and are ever ſcaring themſelves with the Forethought of the very worſt, that can befal Themſelves or Others, particular Families or Cities, Churches or Kingdoms. To *theſe* (and to all ſuch as theſe) we may preſume that our Bleſſed Lord directs the Precept of the Text, —— *Take no Thought for the Morrow.*

It ſhall be my Buſineſs to ſhew both the *Evil*, and the *Unreaſonableneſs* of ſuch *Anxious Thoughts*; and how little they are to be juſtified, either in Point of *Piety* or *Prudence*.

SERM. X.

First, The *Evil* of them lies in *these* Particulars: That they are oppoſite to ſeveral plain *Precepts* of holy Writ; That they often *invade* the peculiar *Province* and *Prerogative* of God, and are always built on a ſecret *Diſtruſt* of his *Providence*.

Several expreſs *Commands* there are in Scripture of the ſame Import with that of the Text: *Be careful for nothing* (ſays St. *Paul*) *but in every Thing, by Prayer and Supplication, with Thankſgiving, let your Requeſts be made known unto God. Caſt all your Care upon him* (ſays St. *Peter*) *for he careth for you. Commit thy Way unto the Lord* (ſays good *David*) *truſt in him, and he ſhall bring it to paſs.* Can a Man tranſgreſs theſe Commands, without Guilt; or entertain any Degree of Anxiety, without tranſgreſſing them?

Phil. iv. 6.

1 Pet. v. 7.

Pſ. xxxvii. 5.

Indeed, when we indulge ourſelves *too far* in theſe melancholy Preſages, and pretend to ſee a great way off the Evils

Evils that ſhall happen to us, we are guilty of *Impiety* on another Account; inaſmuch as we proudly and arrogantly pretend to what doth not lie within the Compaſs of our Knowledge, and affect to partake with the Almighty in one of his great Attributes. *Secret Things belong unto the Lord our God:* *He* alone, who orders and diſpoſes Futurities, can foreſee them at a *Diſtance:* But Man is a ſhort-ſighted and blind Creature; and never more blind, than when he pretends to ſee fartheſt, and to ſet up for *Propheſying*. It is the kind Deſign of God, to wrap up Things to come in Clouds and Darkneſs, leſt we ſhould arrive at the Knowledge of that, which, when known, would certainly trouble us. The Scheme of ſucceſſive Angry Providences, by which God *muſt* govern a wicked World, would be ſo terrible and amazing a Sight, that, in Pity to us, God has ſhortened and bounded our View. And what Madneſs, what Wickedneſs is it then, to pry curiouſly

SERM. X.

Deut. xxix. 29.

SERM. X. into thoſe *Arcana* of Providence, which we can never find out, and which were hidden from us, on purpoſe that we might not find them out! *Secret Things belong unto the Lord our God; but thoſe that are revealed, belong unto us and to our Children:* And one of theſe revealed Truths is, the wiſe Aphoriſm of the Text, *Take no Thought for the Morrow.*

That ſuch *Anxiety* is *Irreligious*, will farther appear, if we conſider it as built always on a ſecret *Diſtruſt* of God's *Goodneſs* towards us, and perpetual *Watchfulneſs* over us. It hath indeed ſomewhat of the Nature of *Infidelity*; and therefore our Saviour applies himſelf to thoſe who give way to it, under *this* Compellation: *O ye of little Faith!* Did we repoſe an entire Confidence in God; were we thoroughly perſuaded, that he is as ready, as he is able, to do every Thing that is needful for us, and that, without his Permiſſion and Appointment, no Snare can entrap us, no Calamity

can crush us, no Evil can approach to hurt us; had we always upon our Minds, I say, a deep and lively Sense of these Truths, it were impossible that a Concern for future Events should much disquiet us; we should certainly, according to the Advice of St. *Peter*, *cast our Care upon God*, if we in good Earnest believed, that he *cared for us*. I do not say, that such a Persuasion would render us indifferent to all Events, and wholly unconcerned at the probable Approach of impending Dangers; but it would in good Measure take off the *Edge* and *Sting* of our Forebodings; it would compose and calm us into a patient Resignation of ourselves to the Divine Will and Appointment; it would make us hope the best, that there is room to hope in every Case, and expect the worst that could happen with Tranquillity and Evenness.

SERM. X.

By the Light of Nature we learn, God is infinitely wise and good: And what greater Security can we have,

SERM. X.

than to be under the Protection of infinite Wisdom and Goodness? Ought we in reason to disturb ourselves with an eager Desire of possessing what infinite Goodness shall be pleased to lay upon us? Do we not know, and feel, that we depend upon God, *originally*, for what we *are*, and *every Moment* for his continued Preservation? That in him we *live*, *move*, *and have our Being*? And can we doubt, whether he, who gave us the greater Gift, *Being* itself, will afford us the Less, whatever is absolutely requisite to our *Well-being*? The Argument is our Saviour's — *Take no Thought* (says he) *for your Life, what ye shall eat; nor yet for your Body, what ye shall put on: Is not the Life more than Meat, and the Body than Rayment?*

Acts xvii. 28.

Matt. vi. 25.

The same plain Lesson we learn also from the Observation of God's perpetual Care and Providence over the several Ranks of *lower* and *less* noble Creatures; over the *Birds* of the Air, and the *Beasts* of the Field, and the very

very *Plants* that flourish on the Face of the Earth. *These all wait upon him, who giveth them their Meat in due Season.* He feeds them within, and he clothes them without, either usefully, or splendidly, as seemeth best to him: His overflowing Bounty supplies them with whatever is suitable to their Natures and Wants: *He openeth his Hands, and filleth all Things living with Good.* And shall he, who provides thus liberally for *inferior* Beings, neglect *any Ways* to take care of *Man*, the Heir of all his Blessings, and Lord of the Creation? Thus hath the same divine Preacher, with admirable *Simplicity* and *Force*, argued in the same Chapter: *Consider the Fowls of the Air* (says he) *for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into Barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them: Are ye not much better then they? And why take ye Thought for Rayment? Consider the Lillies of the Field, how they grow: They toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that*

SERM. X.

Psal. civ. 27.

Matth. vi. 26.

ver. 28, 79, 30.

SERM. X. *that Solomon, in all his Glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothe the Grass of the Field, which To-day is, and To-morrow is cast into the Oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little Faith?*

But I forbear to enlarge farther on *this* Point, that I may have room for those Considerations that belong to my

II. *Second general Head*; under which I proposed to shew, that an anxious Concern for To-morrow, is as destitute of all Pretences to *Wisdom* as *Goodness*.

A Censure, that will not easily be allowed! since the looking forward to the probable Events of Things hath been ever esteemed one of the first and chiefest Instances of *Prudence*. It hath so, and with good Reason; when that Sagacity is employed in a proper *Manner*, and within its due *Bounds*; when it gives the Mind a calm and clear Foresight of the Difficulties it is likely to meet with, and leaves it at Liberty, under

under that View, to prepare itſelf every way for the Encounter: But when it ſerves only to diſarm us of our Courage, and to deprive us of our Reaſon; to create Vexations to us, and to multiply Dangers; it is then the very *Folly of Fooliſhneſs*, as may appear from the enſuing Reflections. For,

1. The Taſk we ſet ourſelves in this Caſe, is infinite and endleſs. And after all will not anſwer the *Deſign*, for which it is intended. He, who makes uncertain *May-be's* the Object of his Concern, has taken Care to ſupply his Mind with perpetual Matter of Diſquiet; has pitched upon a fruitful Subject of Uneaſineſs, which can never be exhauſted. The poſſible Evils and Calamities of Life are without Number; and in vain therefore ſhould we attempt to reckon them up: Or, could we number them, it would be a ſtill vainer Attempt, to forecaſt with ourſelves particularly how we might avoid them: Which yet is perhaps the only wiſe Reaſon that can be given for

SERM. X.

for our muſing much upon them. Did the Affairs of this World proceed in an even and regular Courſe, ſo that we might eaſily trace Effects from their Cauſes, and judge ſurely of the *future* by the *preſent*; it might be reaſonable and prudent often to employ our Thoughts and Concern on Times and Things at a Diſtance, and *endeavour* to foreſee, what were *poſſible* to be foreſeen, in order to make the wiſeſt Uſe and Advantages of it. But alas! we have no ſure Clue to guide us in ſuch Searches as theſe: The *Events* of Life are to the utmoſt Degree *uncertain*, and depend often on ſuch *ſecret* Springs and Motions, as lie without the Reach of our Obſervation; and therefore fall out often ſo croſſly, and ſo contrary to common Rules, that it is but loſt Labour to draw long Schemes beforehand, and form nice Conjectures upon them. *I returned and ſaw under the Sun* (ſays a very experienced Obſerver) *that the Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong, neither yet*

Eccl. ix. 11.

yet Riches to Men of Underſtanding, nor yet Favour to Men of Skill; but Time and Chance happeneth to them all. There is ſcarce any Man, perhaps, who is not ſenſible, that the greateſt Turns that have happened to him in his Fortunes, have been owing to ſuch lucky Hits, and to ſuch a Set of conſpiring Circumſtances, as he could not any ways have *foreſeen*, nor can *yet account* for: And *few* there are, I believe, who have not by the ſame happy Co-incidence of Things, without their Foreknowledge, or Care, eſcaped great Dangers. And what therefore is ſo very uncertain, as future Events are, ought not to be the Object of any great Concern or Paſſion. But were it *poſſible* to gueſs at a remote *Event* with ſome Degree of Aſſurance, yet it is *impoſſible* to know, whether *we* ourſelves ſhall live to ſee it. It may happen, as we preſage: But, e'er it happens, we may be ſnatched from the World; and that is all one to us, as if it were never to happen at all.

And

SERM. X.

And why then ſhould ſuch a *ſhort-liv'd* Thing as *Man*, *lengthen* his Cares to no Purpoſe? Why ſhould a Creature of *to day take Thought for the morrow?*

Either the Evil we fear, will come, or it will not: If it *will*, then the Saying of our Lord takes Place, *ſufficient for the Day* (that is, for the Day of Viſitation) *is the Evil thereof:* It is *Time* enough to bear it, when it *doth* befall us; but it is unpardonable Folly to invite it to *come and torment us before our Time*; to add *imaginary* to *certain* Afflictions, and to ſuffer a Thing a *thouſand* Times over in our Thoughts, becauſe we muſt *once* ſuffer it in Reality. But if it will *not* come, then our *Fear* of it is our only Evil: And ſurely *ſuch* a Fear is *Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*, in the utmoſt Propriety of the Expreſſion. Anxiety of Mind, therefore, makes us feel a Thouſand Afflictions, which will *never* overtake us, and multiplies thoſe which certainly will. And how can

a worſe

a worſe Character poſſibly be given of any Thing, that ſets up for *Prudence?* Nay,

2. It not only multiplies Evils, but takes away from us the Power either to *eſcape*, or *bear* them; renders us incapable of uſing thoſe *Methods* of *Prevention*, which are requiſite to ward the Blow, or of ſuffering what we cannot prevent, with Decency and Patience. This is plain, that the worſt Thing in the World to adviſe with, in Caſe of Dangers, preſent or future, is a ſcared Imagination: For that diſturbs and diſorders a Man's Thoughts to ſuch a Degree, that he cannot calmly conſider what is fitteſt to be done, in order to avoid the Thing he fears; and it deprives him alſo of that Preſence and Firmneſs of Mind, which ſhould ſupport him under what is unavoidable.

That very Trembling, and Weakneſs, which proceeds from too quick a Senſe of approaching Danger, takes away from a Man the Uſe of thoſe

Limbs

SERM. X.

Limbs, which ſhould help him, either to grapple with it, or to decline it.

When thou art afflicting thyſelf therefore, with ſad Omens and Preſages, and applauding thy own *Wiſdom* and *Foreſight* in ſo doing, remember the Deciſion of one, who was certainly *wiſe*, and who has told thee, *that the Fear of Man bringeth a Snare; but he that truſteth in the Lord, ſhall be ſafe.* Again,

Prov. xxix. 25.

3. This Concern for *Futurities* robs us of all the Eaſe and the Advantages, which might ariſe from a proper and diſcreet Uſe of the *preſent* Moment. Certainly, the greateſt Pleaſure, on this Side Heaven, lies in an even and ſerene, a calm, compoſed, and ſteady Mind; that is *inwardly* at reſt, and, by Conſequence, at leiſure to enjoy all *outward* Comforts; that hopes the beſt, and is prepared for the worſt; enjoys the Preſent, and is not anxiouſly concerned for the Future. Such a Temper of Mind is the greateſt Bleſſing God can beſtow upon a Man, becauſe it gives

gives the Taste and Relish to all other Blessings; and therefore the greatest Folly a Man can be guilty of, is, to part with it upon any Account, and to quit a certain Tranquillity *now*, out of the vain Fear of being robbed of it *some time*, or other. Further,

4. 'Tis very *unreasonable* to disquiet ourselves about *distant* Evils; it often happening that the *Presence* of the Things themselves, suggests better Expedients, wiser and quicker Counsels to us, than all our Wisdom and Forethought at a Distance can do. *The Morrow* (says our Lord) *shall take Thought for the Things of itself*; that is, it shall bring along with it a Power and Strength of Mind answerable to its Necessities, a Frame of Spirit every Way suited to our Circumstances and Occasions. Thus *Sickness* (as *one* well observes) " doth of itself produce in " us such a Temper, as is fitted to that " Trial; it makes us affect Privacy and " Silence, which conduce to our Re- " covery, and gives us such a Serious-

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SERM. X.

" neſs, and Readineſs to ſubmit to good " Advice, as is agreeable to the Dan- " gers that attend it. And thus *Ne-* " *ceſſity* and *Want* infuſe into the Soul " that Decency of Behaviour, that " Carefulneſs to watch proper Oppor- " tunities, that Courteſy and Eloquence " of Speech, which no Premeditation " can furniſh, and proves a kind of " Inſpiration." Trouble not thyſelf, therefore, about what is to come: For when it is to come, it ſhall either *find*, or *make* thee ready to undergo it: *To-morrow ſhall take Thought for the Things of itſelf*; and why then ſhouldſt thou be at a *needleſs* Expence of *Thought be-fore-hand?*

To theſe ſeveral Accounts of the *Folly* and *Unreaſonableneſs* of anxious and tormenting Cares, give me Leave to add one more, and I have done.

That, he who indulges them, for-feits his Intereſt in the *divine Provi-dence and Protection*; and *that* is a Loſs, for which all the *Wiſdom*, and *Skill*, and *Foreſight* in the World can make

make no Amends. He that terrifies himself with the Apprehension of *future* Evils, declares in Effect, that he doth not absolutely rely upon *God* for his ordering, and disposing them. And he, who doth not absolutely trust God with all his Concerns, has no Right to his Protection and Defense, no Reason to expect his Support and Assistance; but is left to work out every Thing, as well as he can, by the Dint of *second* Causes, by his own Parts, Policy, and Prudence. And how wretched is his Case, who has brought his Affairs to that Pass, as to be deprived of his best and faithfullest Counsellor, his most kind and potent Friend, and to *live*, as it were, *without God in the World? It is a fearful Thing to fall into the Hands of the living God*, says the Apostle: And surely, *next* to that, it is a fearful Thing to take ourselves *out* of his Hands, and to exempt ourselves from his Care; which he is in good Construction supposed to do, who sets himself with any Degree of *Solicitude to take Thought for the Morrow.*

SERM. X.

Heb. x. 31.

SERM. X.

Let all of us, who are convinced of the Reasonableness of these *Speculations*, put them immediately in *Practice!* let us even *To-day*, *while it is called To-day*, throw off all Anxiety and Concern for *To-morrow!* If we heartily believe the Doctrine of divine Providence, let us shew our *Faith* by our *Works*; let us live, as if we *did* believe it; *Industriously* indeed, *warily*, *wisely*; because by *these* Means we are to entitle ourselves to the Protection of God; but withal, *unconcernedly*, *chearfully*, *resignedly*, as knowing, that we are *secure* of his Protection when we stand in *Need* of it. Let us behave ourselves like dutiful *Children*, under the Guidance of a wise and gracious *Parent*, who, we are satisfied, loves us, and will, as he thinks fit, and sees best, provide for us; and therefore we fall into *all* his *Commands and Directions* with an implicit Obedience, and trouble ourselves with nothing farther, but only to do *the Duty which he hath appointed us*, in our several Places and

and Stations. *Let us caſt all our Care upon him, for he careth for us.* SERM. X.

Nay, ſhould he at any Time ſeem to withdraw his *Favour and the Light of his Countenance from us*; ſhould he *bring us into the Pit and the Snare, and lay Trouble upon our Loins*, ſuffer the Malice of our Enemies, or (which is worſe) the Treachery of our Friends to prevail againſt us; let not *this* itſelf deject us, or ſhake the firm Repoſe of our Minds; but let us ſtill expreſs ourſelves in the ſame reſolved Manner that *Job* did under his ſevere Trials: *While I live, will I not remove mine Integrity from me; though he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him.* Job. xxvii. 5. Let us, even at *ſuch* a Time, take up Words of holy Aſſurance, with *Habakkuk*, and ſay: *Although the Figtree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall Fruit be in the Vines; the Labour of the Olive ſhall fail, and the Field ſhall yield no Meat; the Flocks ſhall be cut off from the Fold, and there ſhall be no Herd in the Stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation.* Hab. iii. 17, 18.

SERM. X.

Could we bring ourſelves once to this Divine Temper of Soul, could we work ourſelves up into this devout Confidence, all the Turns and Viciſſitudes of human Affairs, all the Strokes of ill Fortune, which we *feel* or *fear*, would ſit light and eaſy upon our Minds: In the midſt of Confuſion and Troubles, of Evils imminent, or already come; of real, or fancied Dangers; we might be even and ſerene; *poſſeſſing our Souls in Patience*, and the good Things of Life with *Pleaſure*; and enjoying the *preſent* Moment, without a Mixture of *Fears* and *Diſquiets*, ariſing from near or remote *Poſſibilities:* Saying, nay ſinging as the divine *Pſalmiſt* hath taught us, *God is our Hope and Strength, a very preſent Help in Time of Trouble! Therefore will we not fear, though the Earth be moved, and though the Hills be carried into the midſt of the Sea: Though the Waters thereof rage and ſwell, and though the Mountains ſhake at the Tempeſt of the ſame! God is our Hope and Strength,*

Strength, a very present Help in Time of Trouble. SERM. X.

To whom, even to the *God and Father of our Life*, the wise Dispenser of Good and Evil, the Governor of Events, and Rock of our Confidence, together with his only begotten *Son*, and ever Blessed *Spirit*, be ascribed *all Glory and Praise, now and for ever!*

THE WRETCHEDNESS

Of Living in a

Wavering State of Mind.

The Wretchedness of a Wavering Mind:

A

SERMON

Preached at the

ROLLS Chapel,

December 4, 1698.

GEN. xlix. 4.

Unstable as Water, thou shalt not excel.

SERM. XI.

THESE are Part of the dying Patriarch *Jacob*'s Words, when he blessed the Twelve, *leaning upon the Top of his Staff.* Of the Eldest of these [*Reuben*] the Character he gives is contained in the Words I have read

Heb. xi. 21.

to

SERM. XI.

to you; of which there are several very different Interpretations. I shall not trouble you with them, but take that, which they do most naturally and obviously bear. And according to that, *Jacob* does in these Words seem to represent *Reuben* to be of a fickle, uncertain, irresolute Temper; not utterly void of all *Propensions* to Goodness, but incapable of *acting up* to them; not without honest and virtuous Resolutions, but unable firmly to keep and practise them. And this being his Case, he pronounces upon him, that he *shall not excel.* That is, that he shall never arrive to any Pitch and *Perfection* in Virtue, nor ever command a *thorough* Esteem and Respect from *good* Men; that he should never be able eminently to distinguish himself by the Exercise of those good Qualities of Mind, which procure Honour and Happiness to Men in *this* World, and in *another.* — *Unstable as Water, thou shalt not excel.*

From

From which Words a natural Occasion will be given me of discoursing to you of the *ill Condition* of that Man, who, like *Reuben* in the Text, being *unstable as Water*, is distracted between *two* Courses of Life, a *good* and a *bad* one. The *Unhappiness* and *Wretchedness* of which State, after I have set out and proved to you at large, I shall apply myself to persuade the Man that is *thus bewildered*, to retrieve himself by serious Consideration, as soon as he can, and to fix a *sure* Principle of Virtue in his Mind, that may guide and govern him *throughout*, and make him *uniformly* wise and holy. SERM. XI.

I. Now the Condition of a Man who is divided between two *contrary* Ways of Life, between Virtue and Vice, Godliness and Irreligion, is certainly very wretched and deplorable. For he is in the meanest State of Mind that human Nature is capable of. He is perpetually restless and uneasy; full of Anxiety and Torment. He loses all the Advantages

SERM. XI. vantages of *this* World; and most assuredly forfeits all Pretences to any in the *next*.

1. This doubtful, uncertain Way of Living and Thinking proceeds from a *mean* State of Mind, such as is beneath the Dignity of human Nature.

Man was made to discern and embrace *Truth*; and, for this Reason, *is there a Spirit in him; and the Inspiration of the Almighty has given him Understanding.* He has Faculties, whereby he may distinguish between true and false, right and wrong; and may fix to himself sure Principles of Action. When he *does* this, approves what is best, and sticks to what he approves, he does what he was designed to do, and answers the *End* of his Being. When he does *not*, but suffers himself to be swayed and bent different Ways by different Motives, and to float under Uncertainties, *then* he forfeits the great Prerogative, and the most distinguishing Advantage that belongs to the *reasonable* Nature. The Scrip-

Job xxxii. 8.

ture

ture therefore alloweth not to the Irre- SERM.
reſolute and the Inconſtant the Name XI.
of *Men :* They are ſaid to be *Children*
toſſed to and fro with every Wind of Doc- Eph. iv.
trine. They are in the Weakneſs and 14.
Nonage of their Reaſon, which is as
yet not improved and ripened into its
due Strength and Maturity.

The *Perfection* of Man is to be *like*
God; for *in his own Image created he* Gen. i. 27.
him; to be like God in *all* his Attributes,
particularly in that glorious one of his
Immutability; whereby *he is*, as the
Scripture ſpeaks, *without Variableneſs,* James i.
or Shadow of turning; *the ſame Yeſter-* 17.
day, To-day, and for ever. Heb. xiii. 8.

Now this *Immutability* of God is
twofold, relating either to his *Nature*,
or his *Purpoſes.* The *Unchangeable-*
neſs of his *Nature* we have no Room
to imitate: For he deſigned us for a
Changeable State, made us Creatures
that were to purify our Natures, and
exalt them by Degrees; till by his laſt
great and glorious *Change* he ſhould
tranſlate us into an *Immortal* and *Un-*
alterable

SERM. XI.

alterable State, and make us eternally the *same* in our Natures, and eternally *happy* in the *Exercise* of them. But his *Moral Immutability*, the Steddiness of his Counsels, Purposes and Actions, we *may* in some Measure, and therefore *must* imitate, as far as Human Frailty will suffer us. We are like him in *this* Perfection, when we get to ourselves, by Thought and Reflection, a firm Persuasion of the eternal Differences of Good and Evil, and of that inseparable Dependance which Reward and Punishment have upon them; and when we govern our Lives under the Sense of these Persuasions, *Evenly* and *Uniformly*. This is truly *Godlike!* the great Improvement, the Honour, and the Excellence of our Natures! And this Perfection he robs himself of, who *wavers* between different Principles and Practices; and is sometimes *good* and sometimes *bad*, as it happens. He puts not his *Faculties* to that *Use*, for which they were given him; employs not his *Reason* to those *Purposes*, for

for which it was designed, the establishing and strengthening of his Mind in *moral* Principles; but lives as much at Random, and without Hold, as if *the Breath of the Almighty* were not in him.

Indeed, unless *Reason* gives us a Firmness and Constancy of acting, it is so far from being the Glory and the Privilege, that it is really the Reproach and Disgrace of our Natures; and makes us lower than even *the Horse and Mule that have no Understanding*. For *they*, without *that*, act always regularly and consonantly to themselves, under the never erring Guidance of *Instinct*; a *blind*, but *sure* Principle; whilst *Man*, with all his boasted Titles and Privileges, wanders about in Uncertainties, does and undoes; and contradicts himself throughout all the various Scenes of Thinking and Living.

Psal. xxxii. 9.

2. But the *Dignity* of our Nature, is a Consideration capable of touching but *few*. Let us go on therefore to more

SERM. XI.

more plain and affecting Considerations. For such an *unsettled* Temper of Mind as we have described, creates a great deal of *Trouble* and *Disturbance* to the Man, who is so unhappy as to be Master of it.

And this follows plainly from what has been discoursed upon the former Head. For whatsoever is *natural*, becoming, and worthy of us, is attended always with *Ease* and *Delight* to the Doer; whereas that which thwarts our *first* End and Design, and is destructive of our *natural* Perfections, must needs be *Pain* and *Grief* to us. For the Truth of which in this particular Case we may appeal to the Feeling of all those, who have ever once made the Experiment. How *uneasy* is that Man always to himself, who acts backwards and forwards, and has no sound Bottom to rest upon. What Disquiets does it create in his Mind, to see himself perpetually condemning himself, allowing himself in that Opinion or Practice *this* Hour, which he is sure he

he ſhall diſallow and go againſt in the *next*. [And this perhaps is the only Part of his Temper that he ever can be ſure of.]

SERM. XI.

Certainly a Mind, thus at odds with itſelf, cannot but be very troubleſome to the Man that has it; unleſs together with the Power of keeping his Reſolutions, he has loſt alſo that of reflecting afterwards on the Breach of them. For whenever he looks back upon his Actions, *Guilt* and *Folly* will appear written, as it were, upon the Front of them: He muſt needs pronounce himſelf Light and Inconſiſtent, Inſincere, and Void of that true Fear of God, which dwells only with Simplicity and a ſingle Heart. In fine; ſo many diſagreeable and mortifying Thoughts will offer themſelves to him, as cannot but leave a Wound behind them. And a *Spirit thus wounded* (with *Guilt* and *Folly* too) *who can bear?* In Truth, as to *Eaſe* of Mind, it belongs oftentimes to the *compleatly* wicked, more than to thoſe who are

SERM. XI. by *halves* so. For the *first* may have hardened and stupified his Conscience so far, till it lets him alone, and gives him no farther Notice of the Dangerousness of the State he is in. But he who Sins and Repents, and then sins again in an endless Circle, is sure to hear of his own Follies, and be sensible of his own Miseries. His *good* Fits are like the short *Intervals* of Madness, which serve only to let the *Madman* into a Knowledge of his own Disease; whereas it would be much more to his Satisfaction and Content, if he were Mad *always*.

Good God! When a Man finds himself breaking through all the strongest Bonds that should hold him; through his most deliberate Resolutions, made in Time of great Danger and Adversity, or upon his solemn Approach to the Table of the Lord, but forgotten again in the Presence of any new Temptation, what Horrors must the Sense of this create in him? What Hatred and Contempt of himself? What

What Despair almost of ever arriving at that Strength and Firmness of Mind, which is requisite to carry him evenly on through the Paths of Virtue? Surely he *is like the troubled Sea, that cannot rest, whose Waters cast up Mire and Dirt. There is no Peace, saith my God, to* such a *wicked* one as this.

SERM. XI.

Isa. lvii. 20, 21.

But *further*, such a Temper, so distracted between contrary Inclinations and Practices, is in the

3d Place, mischievous to a Man in Point of *Interest*, as well as *Ease*. For it renders him unfit for all the Affairs and Business of Life; incapable of forming advantageous Designs with Confidence, or of prosecuting them with Effect. *A double minded Man* (saith St. *James*) *is unstable in all his Ways*. He that is so in Point of *Religion* (the greatest and most important Concern of Life, the one Thing necessary) will probably be so in *every* Thing beside; and then what Kind of Undertaking is such an one qualified for? To what Calling can he betake himself

Jam. i. 8.

SERM. XI. with any Probability of Success, who wants the very first Elements of Thriving, Industry, Constancy, and Perseverance? Alas! the Doubts and Misgivings of his Heart concerning his own internal State are such, as take away from him the Taste of all outward Comforts at present, and hinder him from an effectual Pursuit of them. It must be a *Mind easy and at rest*, that can apply itself thoroughly towards making those Advantages of the Things of this Life, which are innocent and lawful. And *such* an one is not *his*, whose *Ways* (as the Wise Man speaks) *are double before the Lord. Besides*, this Unequalness in acting, these Heats and these Colds in Religion, when once they appear (and how can they chuse but appear some time or other?) will draw upon a Man the Suspicion of Hypocrisy and Dissimulation. He, who in the Eye of the World is sometimes *good*, and sometimes *bad*, as it happens, will be sure to have the Measure of himself taken from the

worst

worſt Side of him; and the other Parts of his Character eſteemed only as pure Artifice and Feigning. His Credit will be blaſted, and his good Name be taken away; that Engine, by which he is to profit himſelf and others, and to do all the Good he is like to do in the World. Intimacies and Friendſhips are the great Comforts and Supports of Life, and of theſe ſuch a Man will be thought incapable. What Ground can his *Levity* give any one to build their *Confidence* upon? What Encouragement is there to venture an *Acquaintance* with the Raſh and *Unſtable?* What Reaſon to expect a *mutual* Conſent and Agreement of Thoughts and Affections, from a Mind ſo little *at Unity in itſelf.*

4. But theſe are *ſlight* Inconveniences, in Compariſon of what follows; that ſuch a *wavering* uncertain Temper of Mind is utterly inconſiſtent with the Terms of *Salvation*, and the Hopes of eternal Happineſs. For 'tis not an Holineſs taken up by *Fits* and *Starts*,

SERM. XI.

that can carry a Man to Heaven. It must be a constant regular Principle, influencing us *throughout*, that must do that. *If ye continue in my Word* (says our Saviour) *then are ye my Disciples indeed.* An *uninterrupted* Course of Virtue and Goodness, and nothing less, can justify us before God, and intitle us to our Reward. And the Reason is, because nothing *less* can prove our *Sincerity* to God, which is the great and fundamental Rule, by which we are to be tried. And a Vein of this must run through all our Thoughts and Actions, to make them acceptable before God. *My Son, give me thy Heart*, says God; that is, come to me with a *sincere* and *unfeigned* Design of serving me; surrender up to me *all* thy Inclinations and Affections without Reserve; and give me Possession of thy Soul, without any Rival or Competitor. Which how can *he* be said to do, that admits *contrary* Interests perpetually to struggle within him, and in his heartiest *Repentances*

John viii. 31.

is

is not without ſome Proſpect of *Sinning* again? Holy *David* therefore makes *Inſincerity* the Character and Mark of theſe kind of Men: *Their Heart was not right with God*, ſays he, *neither were they ſtedfaſt in his Covenant*. The one follows upon the other; if ſo be that they are not *ſtedfaſt*, neither can their Hearts be *right with God*.

SERM. XI.

Pſ. lxxviii. 37.

Let not a Man therefore flatter himſelf that Things are well with him, becauſe he is not abſolutely *given over to work Wickedneſs*, but though he ſometimes ſeems to be *dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins*, yet he ſoon *riſes* again by Repentance; for aſſuredly this (which is at the Bottom nothing but an Art of getting to Heaven, and yet enjoying his Luſts all the while) will not ſerve his Turn. There is no Promiſe in Scripture that belongs to the *unſtable* and *wavering* Man; the Terms of the Covenant are *univerſal Purity*; or at *leaſt univerſal Sincerity:* And *under* theſe, can no Man be ſaved.

Eph. ii. 1.

SERM. XI.

And as the State of a Man is thus, with Respect to another World, very dangerous and bad *already*, so is it likely to grow worse and worse *still* without Remedy. For every *new* Return to Sin, every single Desertion of Virtue, does naturally unqualify a Man more and more for a sound Repentance, and weakens all the Motives that lead to it. Sin does by this Means grow familiar to us, and loses its Frightfulness. By our suffering its continual Approaches, it begins to appear to us in a more harmless Shape: We find fewer Horrors about us at the Thought of it, fewer Desires of avoiding it.

Besides, by these *Vicissitudes* of sinning and relapsing, our Resolution at last is quite broken; and we sit down every Time with less Hopes of the Mercy and Forgiveness of God, and of his Grace and Assistance.

Much more might be said, to set out the great *Danger* of such a State, and the Inconsistency of it with the

Terms

Terms of Salvation, if this were not too plain a Point to need any farther Proof; and therefore I chuse rather in what remains, to go on, as I proposed, from these several Considerations, SERM. XI.

II. *Secondly*, To persuade the Man that is thus *bewildered*, to retrieve himself by serious Consideration, as soon as is possible; and to fix a sure Principle of *Virtue* in his Mind, that may guide and govern him *throughout*, and make him *uniformly* wise and holy.

For which Purpose I shall take leave to recommend two or three *plain*, but *useful* Considerations.

1. And *first*, he that sets about this Work, must be sure that his *Belief* is right and sound at the Bottom: For 'tis generally the Uncertainty and Waveringness of this, that produces all that Unevenness, and Disorder in the Life and Practice of Mankind. A sudden Heat of Devotion, or the Fear of what will become of a Man in the other

SERM. XI. other World, will carry him sometimes into mighty Resolutions of quitting Sin, and living well for the future. But these wear off quickly and come to nothing; because they arose only from present Passion, and were not built on any good Foundation, on any strong and full Conviction of the Mind. They are *the Seed which fell upon stony Places, where they had not much Earth; and forthwith they sprang up, because they had no Deepness of Earth: But when the Sun was up* (when an *hot* Temptation presented itself afresh) *they were scorched; and because they had no Root, they withered away.* Let him therefore, who would pursue this Cure to Purpose, *look to himself, lest there be in him an evil Heart of Unbelief.* Let him enquire diligently of himself, whereon it is that his *Faith* stands; how he comes to be persuaded of the Truth of *Natural* Principles, and of those of *Revealed Religion.* And let him (if he has it not already) procure to himself such an Evidence of these Things,

Matt. xiii. 5, 6.

Heb. iii. 12.

Things, as is not to be ſhaken. For when this Principle is once well fixed in his Heart, Virtue will go out from it into his Life and Actions; and it will work Wonders towards making him all Harmonious, and of a Piece. When he has gone *thus* far, let him,

SERM. XI.

2. In the next Place, conſider well what that *particular Weight* was, that in the Days of his *Irreſolution* ſtill hung upon him, and clogged all his virtuous Endeavours. What it was, that, when his Soul had made ſome Effort towards Goodneſs, overbalanced it ſtill, and ſwayed it ſecretly again towards Nature's Side: For that too is very often the Caſe. There is ſome particular Sin of our Conſtitution, ſome great and ruling Infirmity, that damps all our good Motions, and ſpoils all our beſt Reſolutions; and will continue to do ſo, 'till by a direct Oppoſition of ourſelves to it, we have conquered and removed it. When we have

SERM. XI.

have cut off *this Right Hand*, plucked out *this Right Eye*, sacrificed the darling Lust of our Heart, we may then hope, that the greatest Part of the Difficulty is over, and that no *less powerful* Temptation will be able to draw us aside. But 'till *this* be done, in vain are all our *other* Attempts and Designs. While *the great Offence* has yet any Hold upon us, nothing will be done to Purpose; but he that *has* been divided in his Opinion, and wavering in his Practice, will be divided and wavering *still*.

3. When he has *thus* settled his *Faith* upon good Grounds, and armed himself well against *that Sin which does so easily beset him*, he must take care (in the next Place) not to suffer himself to come within Reach of any Thing that may any ways *unfasten* his Resolutions, whilst they are yet young and tender. He must admit of no Debate within him about a *Principle*, but throw off all such Thoughts, as Enemies

Heb. xii. 1.

mies to the Peace of his Mind. He must listen to no *sceptical* Discourse; no loose Reasonings of carnal Men, such as pervert the Truth. For these are the chief Engines of *Satan* to draw him back again into his former Unsettledness; and his good Purposes may happen to be blasted in the Bud, if they are ventured too soon amongst them. No! No! but let him root and ground himself in the *Faith* first by an answerable Life and Conversation; so shall it happen, that as his good *Practice* took rise at *first* from his good *Opinions*, so shall his *Opinions* be strengthened *afterwards* by his *Practice*; 'till *both* being *confirmed* in him, shall enable him to *stand in the evil Day*, and not to be afraid of whatever it is that would shake his *Stedfastness*.

Eph. vi. 13.

4. If to these *Endeavours* he (lastly) joins fervent and unwearied *Prayer* to Almighty God, for the Aids and Supports of his *Grace*, he shall assuredly from

SERM. X. from thence be made *perfect* at last, be *stablished*, *strengthened*, *settled*. He shall have a new Heart created in him, that shall enable him to *be stedfast*, *immoveable*, *always abounding in the Work of the Lord*.

1 Cor. xv. 58.

THE

THE DUTY OF LIVING PEACEABLY, Explained and Recommended.

Of Living Peaceably:

A

Farewel SERMON

Preached at

St. *BRIDE*'s

December 11, 1698.

ROM. xii. 18.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all Men.

SERM. XII.

THERE are many excellent Precepts and Rules of Duty laid together by the *Apostle* toward the End of this Chapter; but none of greater Moment to be earnestly inculcated upon

SERM. XII. *Christians*, and duly observed, than this which I have pitched upon for the Subject of my following Discourse. And I have the rather chose it, at this particular Time, because it is the last Opportunity I shall have of bespeaking you under that *Character*, which I have hitherto borne towards you. And it being likely therefore that the Contest now on foot, may end in the same little Animosities and Misunderstandings, which are usual on such Occasions; I thought I could not do better, than to discourse to you upon a Subject that might be of some Use to temper and allay them; and to dispose you towards such a peaceable State of Mind, as becomes those, who are about to chuse a Minister of the *Gospel of Peace*.

I shall discourse *first* to you of the Argument at *large*, and then apply it to the *particular* Occasion for which I have chosen it. What I have to say on these Words, must naturally fall under these four Heads following:

First,

First, Here is a *Command* enjoined; to *live peaceably*.

Secondly, The utmost *Limits* and *Extent* of that Command are set down; we must live peaceably *with all Men*. II.

Thirdly, The great *Difficulty* of so doing, is allowed and expressed: *If it be possible*, says St. *Paul*, and *as much as in you lies*; intimating, that in respect of some *Tempers*, and in some *Circumstances*, it is scarce possible, though we do all that in us lies, to effect it. To which I shall add in the III.

Fourth and *last* Place, some familiar *Helps* and *Directions*, that may be of Use to assist us towards performing it. IV.

As to the *First* of these, the *Precept* here given of *living peaceably*, I need not use many Words to tell you what it is; it is easily and universally I.

SERM. XII.

underſtood: Would to God, it were but as univerſally practiſed! And then ſuch Exhortations as theſe would be needleſs! But though an Account of the *Duty* may not be requiſite, to inform even the meaneſt and moſt ignorant *Chriſtian*, yet it may be of uſe to bring to his Mind what he already knows, and to awaken in him ſenſible and lively Impreſſions of it: And to that End, I ſhall in a very brief, and plain Manner deſcribe it.

To *live peaceably*, is ſo to demean ourſelves in all the Offices and Stations of Life, as to promote a friendly Underſtanding and Correſpondence among thoſe we converſe with; ſo as to prevent, as much as we can, all *outward* Contention and Strife, nay, all *inward* Miſtakes and Jealouſies from ariſing, and to quench and allay them as ſoon as we can, whenever they are riſen; ſo, as to diſagree *openly* with no Man in Things of an *indifferent* Nature, and of no Moment; and, where the Point is of *Importance* enough to deſerve to be

be insisted on, there to do it, with so much Candor, and Modesty, and Sweetness, as not to offend even those we do not agree with. In a Word, it is so to conduct our Actions, Discourses, and Dealings, as to make ourselves and others as *easy* as is possible. Various are the Instances of this Duty; some influencing our Behaviour with relation to the *Publick*, some towards *Private* Men; some regarding *Opinions*, and some regulating our *Practice*; some taking Place in Matters of *Civil* Life, and some in the Concerns of *Religion*.

They *live peaceably* with respect to the *Publick*, who pay a due Regard to the *Laws* of their Country, and express a due Reverence towards their *Superiors*; honouring them sincerely, obeying them submissively; not rashly censuring their Actions, but putting the best and most candid Construction upon them; not being over busy in Matters that are too high for them, and do not concern them.

SERM. XII.

They *live peaceably* in *Religious* Matters, who, on the *one* Side, are contented to enjoy their own Opinions, without arraigning their Superiors in Church and State for being otherwiſe minded; and without diſturbing the publick Peace, in order to propagate their Tenets, and make Proſelytes; and who, on the *other* Side, do not by unjuſtifiable Methods of Severity force Men into the Profeſſion of what they diſbelieve; whoſe Zeal for their Faith never makes them forget their Temper, nor outrun the Bounds of Chriſtian Goodneſs and Prudence; who make great Allowances for the Weakneſs of Men's Reaſon and the Strength of their Prejudices, and condemn not all as inſincere, who are not ſo enlightened as they are; but leave them to ſtand or fall to their own Maſter; praying for them in the mean time, that they may come to the Knowledge of the Truth, and endeavouring by all gentle perſuaſive Methods to reclaim them.

Finally,

Finally, They *live peaceably* in Matters of *common* Life and *daily* Practice, who take care to make their Carriage inoffensive, obliging; who are not ready to entertain ill Reports of Men, much less to disperse them; who whisper about nothing to set Friends and Neighbours at Variance; who mind their own Business, without intermeddling much in the Concerns of others; who can take a *slight* Affront or Injury in Conversation without resenting it, and even a *great* one without returning it. SERM. XII.

But I forbear to give any further Description of so known a Duty; and go on to consider in the

Second Place, the *Extent* of it; it must be practised towards *all Men:* Not only towards those who are in *good* Terms with us, but toward those who are *not*; not only to the Good-natured and Candid, but even to the Captious and the Froward. For, as our Saviour argues in a like Case, if II.

SERM. XII. you live peaceably with *them only*, who live peaceably with *you*, *what Thank have you? Do not even Sinners the same?* The Worst, and worst Natured Men will go thus far: For there is no Temptation to break Peace with those who live inoffensively with us, no room for Contention with the Mild and Complying; the Tryal of our Temper is, when Shocking Accidents happen to us, when Ill Words are given us; when we are touched in Point of Interest and Honour; or in any other respect drawn into a Dispute, and forced to engage: Then, to bear Opposition meekly, to ward off the Anger of our Adversaries by a discreet and dexterous Address; to keep ourselves free from the Contagion of that Passion and that Resentment which reigns in them, or free at least from the outward and visible Signs of it, this is no *vulgar* Attainment, but a very great Pitch of Christian *Perfection*. And the *Apostle* therefore, at the very Time he is giving the *Precept*,

Matt. v. 46.

cept, acknowledges the great *Difficulty* that there is ſometimes in *obeying* it: *If it be poſſible*, ſays he, and *as much as in you lies*; intimating, as I ſaid, that in reſpect of *ſome Natures*, and in *ſome Circumſtances*, it is *ſcarce* poſſible, tho' we do whatever in us lies, to come up to it.

SERM. XII.

And this is the *Third* Thing I undertook to explain. III.

To *live peaceably with all Men*, in the ſtricteſt Senſe of the Words, is a Thing abſolutely impoſſible, and out of our Reach; for it depends upon what we are not Maſters of, the Diſpoſitions and Paſſions of other Men. Let us take what Care we can to prevent Miſtakes, they will ſometimes ariſe; let us with never ſo much Caution avoid *doing* Injuries, we cannot always avoid *receiving* them; ſome churliſh and ſavage Natures there are, that delight in Outrages, and are moved with no Condeſcenſions, no Compliances; *ſuch Sons of Belial* (as was ſaid

1 Sam. xxv. 17.

SERM. XII. ſaid of *Nabal) that a Man cannot ſpeak to them.* Where *violent* Encroachments are made upon our *Fortune* or *good Name*, we not only *may*, but *muſt* vindicate ourſelves from them, though Breach of Peace, and an open Rupture with any Man attend our doing it. *Slight* Affronts, and *ſmall* Injuſtices we may put up with; but where we are wounded to the *Quick*, either in our Eſtate, or Reputation, we are not at *Liberty* to be ſilent: To be upon our Defence in ſuch Caſes, is a Debt we owe to ourſelves, our Poſterity, our Relations, and Friends, who have all an Intereſt in us.

When the Cauſe of true Religion ſuffers from the Tongues or Pens of Libertines and Unbelievers; when any open Attempts are by ill Men made on the Conſtitution of that Church or State, whereof we are Members; when an abſent Friend is traduced by lying Lips; or the Name of any ſincerely good and virtuous Man is vilified; it is our Duty in ſuch Caſes to

to ſtand up, and rebuke this Spirit of Treachery, Malice, or Prophaneneſs. The Honour of God, or the Interests of Virtue would, at ſuch a Time, be blemiſhed by our Silence and Forbearance: And therefore the Rule of our Saviour here takes Place; *he that is not with us, is againſt us.* He that doth not openly and heartily eſpouſe the Cauſe of *Truth*, will be reckoned to have been on the other Side. And then *Peace* with *Men* can never be eligible, when it implies *Enmity* with *God.*

However, in all theſe Caſes, where we lay aſide *Peace* for a more valuable End, we are bound to have an Eye to it, even while we ſeem to overlook it; and muſt ſo break with Men on ſuch Occaſions, as to leave Room, and to prepare the Way for a Cloſure. *War* itſelf has its Rules and Reſtraints, within which its ſavage Cruelties are bounded: Much more muſt the Meaſures of our Reſentment, in ſuch Breaches as theſe, be tempered with

SERM. XII.

with great Humanity and great Prudence. We muſt recover our Right, and wipe off Aſperſions, without Rancour or Revenge; we muſt contend for the Truth of the Goſpel itſelf, ſo as not to forget the plain Precepts of it; and for the Glory of God, with ſuch a well regulated Zeal, as does not trample upon any of his Commands: That is, the Warmth of our Concern for the beſt Doctrines, Perſons, or Things, muſt never ſo far tranſport us, as to make us ſay any Thing of any Man, but what our Cauſe and his Character will juſtify; nor endeavour to inſpire People with worſe Opinions concerning him, than we in our Conſciences believe he deſerves. And to preſerve ourſelves thus far upon our Guard, when we are engaged, is a much harder Taſk than not to engage at all; and will require our calling in to our Aid all the pious Helps and Expedients, with which Reaſon and Religion will furniſh

niſh us; and which therefore I ſhall now, in the SERM. XII.

Fourth and *laſt* Place, point out to you. IV.

Many of this Kind there are; but the Time I have already ſpent, and the Application I am further to make of the Whole, will not ſuffer me to mention *all*, or to dwell, as much as I ought, even on *thoſe* that I do mention.

1. The Riſe of moſt of our Diſquiets and Diſcords is, from the tumultuous and diſorderly Motions of our *Paſſions*; and theſe therefore muſt in the *firſt* Place be well regulated, eſpecially that fierce and boiſterous Paſſion of *Anger*, which diſcovers itſelf the earlieſt, and is tamed the lateſt of any; and is, of all others, the greateſt Enemy of our Repoſe. *This* therefore, and the *reſt* muſt be brought under the Diſcipline and Government of *Reaſon*, if we ever hope to be eaſy to ourſelves or other Men; and indeed,

SERM. XII. deed, unleſs we are firſt eaſy to ourſelves, it is impoſſible we ſhould ever be ſo to others. We may as well expect perpetual Sun-ſhine in Climates ſubject to Storms and Hurricanes, as that there ſhould be a *laſting* Peace in that Breaſt, where the *Paſſions* are allowed to reign.

2. The next plain Help towards *living peaceably* is, if we moderate our Deſires, and ſhorten our Deſigns, with Regard to the good Things of Life, contenting ourſelves with ſuch a Share of them, as anſwers all the good Ends of living, and not eagerly graſping after more, than would be of real Uſe to us, if we had it: The Wants and Conveniences of *Nature* are known, and certain, and ſoon ſupplied; but *imaginary* Wants are infinite and endleſs; and he that has ſet his Heart upon them, will find it very difficult ever to recall it. He is got beyond Reaſon in his Deſire, and will probably ſtick at no unreaſonable Method of obtaining it. And the natural Iſſue of

of this muſt be perpetual Feuds and Bickerings, Contentions and Struggles; for *our* Deſires will meet thoſe of *other* Men, as eager every whit as ours, and as impatient of being reſiſted. *From whence come War and Fightings?* (ſays St. *James.*) *Come they not hence, even of your Luſts?* that is, from your covetous Deſires; for ſo it follows: *Ye luſt, and have not; ye kill, and deſire to have, and cannot obtain.*

SERM. XII.

James iv. 1, 2.

3. A third Rule, in this Caſe, is, to have a watchful Eye upon ourſelves, in our firſt *Entrance* upon any Debate or Conteſt; and at that Time to be ſure to keep the Reins cloſely in our Hands, *when* there is the moſt Danger in giving a looſe to them; and they are the moſt eaſily manageable. For let us but indulge ourſelves a little in the firſt Motions of Warmth and Reſentment, and by inſenſible Steps and Degrees we may be wrought up at laſt into all the Heighth of Madneſs and Folly. *The beginning of Strife* (ſaith

Prov. xvii. 14.

SERM. XII. (ſaith the Wiſe Man) *is as when one letteth out Water.* When the Bank is once broken down, we do not know how far it may flow, or how deep a Space it may fill.

To this we may add,

4thly A particular Vigilance over ourſelves, with regard to the Intemperance of the *Tongue*, that *Member which ſetteth on Fire the Courſe of Nature, and is itſelf ſet on Fire of Hell.* We muſt reſtrain it in every Reſpect, but eſpecially in relation to that natural Proneneſs it has towards publiſhing the Faults of others; which ought never to be done, but with the utmoſt Caution and Tenderneſs. We can never ſtrictly juſtify ourſelves in ſpeaking Evil of any Man, though that Evil ſhould be true, but when either the Seal of Friendſhip binds up the Diſcourſe, or the Rules of Charity and Juſtice require us ſo to do. The Son of *Sirach* ſeems to carry this Matter very far: *Whether it be to Friend or Foe* (ſays he) *talk not of other Men's Lives,*

James iii. 6.

Ecclus. xix. 8.

Lives, and, if thou canſt without Offence, reveal them not; which ſeems to bar us from ſpreading an ill Report of any Man, but when we are under an abſolute *Neceſſity* of doing it. He that governs himſelf conſtantly by *this* Rule, takes one of the ſureſt and moſt promiſing *Steps* towards *living peaceably with all Men:* Eſpecially if, SERM. XII.

5thly He keeps himſelf always from embarking in Parties and Factions, and falling in with Vehemence into all the Intereſts and Deſigns of them. This will neceſſarily in Time imbitter his Spirit, and ſour his Humour, make him like and diſlike Men implicitly, and lead him into many Reſentments, which he has nothing to do with.

Again, 6thly Let a Man that deſires to paſs through this World inoffenſively, reſolve to be very diligent in his particular *Profeſſion* and *Calling*; and if he has none, to make one to himſelf, by ſome proper and

SERM. XII.

ſuitable Employment. He that is employed, has no Leiſure to move in the little Diſputes and Quarrels which trouble the Peace of the World, and which are chiefly kept up and bandied to and fro by thoſe who have nothing elſe to do: The Apoſtle therefore (we may obſerve) in his Exhortion joins *ſtudying to be quiet*, with the *doing our own Buſineſs*, as if the one was a natural and inſeparable Attendant on the other.

1 Theſſ. iv. 11.

Above all, let him add, in the *laſt* Place, fervent and unwearied *Prayer* to the bleſſed *Author of Peace, and Lover of Concord*, that he would pleaſe to vouchſafe him the ineſtimable Benefits of it, and endue him with the Qualities that promote it, by the powerful Operation of that *Spirit*, whoſe *Fruits*, *Love*, *Joy*, and *Peace*, are peculiarly ſaid to be; who inhabiteth only with thoſe, who do in ſome Meaſure partake of them, and who to thoſe, with whom he inhabits, imparteth

parteth them yet more and more abundantly.

Thus have I largely explained to you the Duty of *living peaceably*, and ſhewn you ſome of the moſt effectual Methods of performing it. Would to God all that hear me this Day would reſolve to practiſe this plain, but uſeful Leſſon, as fully as I have handled it, and give a remarkable Inſtance of their Compliance with the Direction of the Text, in the *Choice* that is now coming before you; wherein, I fear, there will be but too much Occaſion given of trying how far theſe Conſiderations have had their due Weight with you, and made a deep and becoming Impreſſion upon you.

Seven Years I have from this Place admoniſhed, exhorted, beſought you: What Succeſs theſe Labours of mine have had, He knows beſt, for whoſe Glory they were deſigned. It will be one ſure and comfortable Sign to me

SERM. XII. that they have had *ſome*, if it ſhall appear, that the Words I have ſpoken to you To-day, are not in vain; if they ſhall prevail with you in any meaſure, to avoid thoſe Rocks, which are uſually ſplit upon in Elections, where Multitudes of different Inclinations, Capacities, and Judgments are intereſted. To which End, let me intreat you, that, ſince in theſe Caſes Unanimity, and an entire Agreement of Hearts and Voices is not to be expected, you would at leaſt take Care to diſagree, in as decent, and friendly, and Chriſtian a Manner as is poſſible.

Let not your Zeal for any *one* Man's Character ever draw you to load, and depreciate, and vilify *another!* Take not up ſlight Reports to Men's Diſadvantage, ſpread them not, encourage them not, liſten not with Greedineſs to them.

Let it be enough, that the unſucceſsful *loſe* what they ſeek after, an Opportunity of exerciſing among you that

that Talent in divine Instructions wherewith God has enabled them. Let them not *lose* also, as far as in any of you lies, their *good Name*, that great Engine of doing good, by which their Labours must be made effectual to other Persons, in other Places; and which as far as any of you shall *endeavour* to deprive them of, so far will you endeavour to obstruct the Influence of their Doctrine, and to make their Character useless.

SERM. XII.

Remember, I beseech you, that your holy Contention is, about *a Minister of the Gospel of Christ*; carry it not on by a Violation of any Rules of the Gospel: Those Rules, for the Breach of which, if he be a good Man (as I question not he will be) he will not thank you, nay will be obliged by his very Post to reprove you afterwards.

I speak not this to accuse any of you, as if any of these Methods had been already practised; but knowing how the *Passions* of Men, not under

SERM. XII.

the ſtrong Checks and Reſtraints of *Grace*, are apt to work on theſe Occaſions, as becomes me, I warn you.

Set an Example to the reſt of the Pariſhes of this ample City, in the Management of ſuch Elections as theſe, reform the Diſorders that (God knows) too often attend them. Manifeſt to the World the *Reaſonableneſs* of your having an Intereſt in chuſing your Preachers, by the fit and laudable *Manner* in which you make uſe of it. Be not too ſtiff and peremptory in your Opinions: Let thoſe who are (or ſhould be) conſcious of their not having all the Advantages requiſite towards determining their Choice in theſe Things, defer ſomewhat to the Judgment of ſuch as are perhaps ſomewhat better qualified for it: They muſt judge for themſelves indeed, their Souls are concerned; but let them judge with Humility and Modeſty.

Should ſome little Heats ariſe, while the Diſpute laſts, when it is over, I am confident hey will vaniſh; and all of

of you will join in paying that Person you shall pitch upon, the Esteem due to his Function, and to his Station here; and which, I take this Opportunity of telling the World, I have truly received from you. SERM. XII.

However, though I have no Reason in any respect to complain of my Entertainment among you, yet nothing would please me better than to hear that your Respect and Love was in every Instance increased towards him that is to succeed me; because nothing can be a better Evidence of your *Sincerity* in Religion, and of your *Growth* in it, than when you grow also in your sincere *Regards* to those, who in a particular manner belong both to *that* and *you*. And it is an infallible Sign, that the Truths of the Gospel have not made that Impression upon a Man's Heart and Conscience which they ought to do, when the Preachers of the Gospel have not had that Share in his Esteem, which belongs to the Use-

SERM. XII. fulneſs and Dignity of their ſacred Employment.

And this I take to be ſo univerſal a Rule, as to admit of no Exception; at leaſt, I am ſure, I never met with any. And it is therefore my Hope, I ſay, that you will always ſhew yourſelves to be a religious People, and under the Influence of good Principles, by your Behaviour towards thoſe whoſe Buſineſs it is to *watch over you for good*; which will be one Way, I am ſure, of ſecuring to yourſelves a Succeſſion of able and worthy Men, as may adorn this Place, equally by their Lives and Doctrines; and be a laſting Honour and Advantage to thoſe who chuſe them.

As for *myſelf*, with how great Imperfection I have performed my Duty here, and how far ſhort I have fallen of the important Truſt committed to me, of inſtructing and guiding you in the Ways of Virtue, no Body can be more ſenſible of than I am. However, thus much I take leave to ſay, that in

Simpli-

Simplicity and godly Sincerity I have preached the *Gospel of Christ* among you; directing my Discourses always against those vicious *Principles* and *Practices*, which to me seemed most to prevail; and sparing nothing I observed to be amiss in you, out of Regard to Men's *Persons or Opinions*, or to any worldly Consideration whatever.

The Infidelity of the Age has forced me to dwell often on the great Articles and Mysteries of our Faith, and to explain them largely: But I call God to witness, that I never proposed any Explication of these Points, never recommended any Thing of this Kind to *your* Belief, but what I firmly, and from the Bottom of my Heart *believed myself*. The *Faith* I have delivered to you, the *Faith* of the Church of *England*, into which we are *all* baptized, is, I am intirely satisfied, the same that *was once delivered to the Saints:* I hope none of you will be ever invited, by the specious Arts and Insi-

SERM. XII. Insinuations of *Heresy*, to depart from it. I am sure the Profession of it in all its Branches and Members, is what, by the Grace of God, *I intend to live and to die in.*

The *Church* you are of, is without doubt, the purest and soundest, the most reasonable and moderate Church upon Earth; the nearest to the primitive Pattern of any, and the most serviceable to our Improvement in Virtue and Godliness: Reverence her, I beseech you, in proportion to her Worth; quit not her Communion for any Boasts to more *pure* and *spiritual* Worship; nor for the Amusements of a more *glorious* and *splendid* one; for the Pretences of those Men who make *Reason* their *God*, without taking in *Revelation* for their *Guide*; or for the extravagant Follies and Freaks of *Enthusiasm*.

As a Sign of your unfeigned Respect for her Constitution, resort often to her Service, and let your outward Behaviour there speak your inward Devotion;

tion; frequent her Sacraments; listen to her Instructions from the Pulpit; breed up your Children in the Knowledge of her Articles of Religion; season them early with a due Value for her Doctrine and Discipline; and satisfy yourselves, that this is one of the best Legacies you can leave them.

This is what I have always inculcated to you, and, had the Providence of God continued me longer among you, should have gone on to inculcate still. I can only hereafter wish it, and pray for it, which I shall not fail to perform.

Indeed my particular Employment here now ceases, but my *Relation* to you, I trust, never shall; I shall always cherish the *Memory* of it, and reflect gratefully upon it, reckoning myself *yours* in some measure, even after my ministerial Office here is at an End, and being ready to serve any, even the meanest of you, in all the Christian Duties and Services of which I am capable.

And

SERM. XII.

And now, Brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an Inheritance among them that are sanctified. And may *the God of Peace* (that Peace, to the Practice of which I have now been exhorting and persuading you) may *the God of Peace, who brought again from the Dead our Lord* Jesus, *that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good Work to do his Will; working in you that which is well pleasing in his Sight, through* Jesus Christ, *to whom be Glory for ever and ever,* Amen.

Acts xx. 32.

Heb. xiii. 20.

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